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THE TRANSFORMING CLASSROOM: PEDAGOGY FOR TODAY AND THE FUTURE

by

Philip Franklin Young

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of The Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Greensboro
1996

Approved by

Dissertation Advisor

YOUNG, PHILIP FRANKLIN Ph.D. The Transforming Classroom: Pedagogy for Today and the Future. (1996) Directed by Dr. Hepzibah Roskelly. 312pp.

The central concern of this dissertation is the search for pedagogical theory that is appropriate for teaching in the complex environment of the undergraduate college classroom. The problems it addresses include the struggle to gain and maintain student interest, finding ways for instructors to use theory to help them think about their teaching, the importance of authentic contact between students/instructors, and the impact of current and future cultural contexts surrounding students and instructors on teaching situations at the university. To navigate this complexity, this work has developed two concepts for thinking about the many diverse ideas and circumstances that enter into the teaching situation: instructors rethinking themselves as pedagogues and the Transforming Classroom.

The introduction begins the discussion of both ideas. Defining the term pedagogue is crucial for giving people engaged in the act of teaching a name that reflects some essential concepts an instructor needs to have in mind when teaching. A pedagogue is an instructor who thinks about his/her thinking regarding teaching, who understands that the social transmission of knowledge requires thoughtful awareness of human relationships as well as expertise in an area of study, and someone who values students in ways that allow students to experience authentic learning (in their own minds). To achieve this practice, this work also proposes the idea of the Transforming Classroom, which is a theory/practice meta model designed to be context responsive to varying and particular teaching situations. The second chapter explores the works of various theorists and the ideas they propose that contributed to the idea of the Transforming Classroom.

Chapters three and four explore the theories that support the meta theory of the Transforming Classroom. Chapter three concentrates on the idea of reality as something

constructed by subjects interacting with other subjects and objects. The work of Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky is central to the discussion of how reality construction and university instruction meet dynamically in the classroom. Chapter four discusses additional theoretical concepts that contribute to the idea of the Transforming Classroom: degrees of difference, agendas, and meaning/thinking/interpretation. The final chapter provides thick descriptions of classes taught using the Transforming Classroom model. This chapter demonstrates the theory ideas as they materialized in student writing in each of the courses.

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Dissertation Advisor _____

Committee Members _____

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10/30/96
Date of Acceptance by Committtee

10/30/96
Date of Final Oral Examination

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to pedagogues -- past, present, and future -- who in the practice of their teaching encourage students to participate in the construction of realities that promote community, thoughtful progress, equality, and a life mindful of human responsibility to others and our world.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I could never fully grasp the full value of this part of a writer's work until I had reached this point myself. To suggest that this work belongs to me, alone, really strikes me as a bit absurd when I begin to consider all the people who have contributed to the growth that helped me produce this text. I wish I could recount even the people whose apparently disconnected conversations indirectly added to the expression of the ideas present in this text. I can and will acknowledge the people who contributed most directly to this particular crossroad in my continuing development. To them I offer my thanks, appreciation, and love.

To my parents, Frank and Sue Young, and my grandparents, Ken and Ruby Welborn. They have provided me with love and support all my life. Their encouragement and belief in my abilities have always helped me strive to achieve the best in all areas of my life. They set forth examples of love, hard work, determination, and dedication. Their positive regard for my goals and dreams provided the foundation for my successes in life.

To Krista Young, who, more than anyone else, has seen the most of me as I worked to complete this dream. Thanks to her tremendous insight into human relationships and her exceptional knowledge of communication skills, she has been a constant source of feedback and progress in my thinking about ways to make my work real and authentic to the people I taught and encountered along this journey. She has always helped me keep the right perspective.

To my teachers, the pedagogues who set forth the examples I tried to capture in theory in this work: Dr. Hepzibah Roskelly, Dr. Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater, Dr. Greg Meyerson, Dr. Nan Enstad, Dr. Patricia Roberts, Dr. Randolph "Mac" Bulgin, and Dr. Jean Buchert (from UNCG); Dr. Jim McCoy (from UNCCH); Angie Johnson, Al Johnson, Sam Wicker, Steve Helms, and Ray Driscoll (from Southeast Guilford High School). And a special honorary mention for Dr. Steve Yarborough, who kindly read this work at the last minute. Thank you for your inspiration.

To the many friends who have known me throughout my life and have always shown their concern and support: Bryan Cope (The Man), Bud Willis (Navajowind), Rob (Chico) and Deanne Maynard, Arran Gregg, April Smith, Kellie Shoffner, Allison Halstead, Traci Dinwiddie (Paris/Galetea), Denise Branch (Veronica), Jo Haas, Elizabeth Scott Watson (Aphrodite/Athena), Judy Hicks, Christy and Giles Kirksey.

A very special thank you to Wendy Mann (Persephone/Artemis), for her friendship and her contributions to my class and this work.

A most hearty thank you to all of my students, with special mention: Mary Knight, Andrea Fullbright, Brigit Populorum, Leslie Holder, Marisa Giardina, and Leatha Staley and all the students whose work appears in this dissertation.

A special thanks to Robert and Laura Pearse, who first employed me as a bartender at Roberts in 1990 and who currently employ me at Revival Grill as the bar manager. I could not have asked for better friends and employers while I worked and attended school. And thanks to the staff at Revival Grill (Don, Grady, Alysse, Nicole, Philip H., Mary Lou, Adrian, Tina, Tim, Matt, Julie, Jeremiah, Chris B., Mike, Jim, Chris K., and Barbara) and the "regulars" (Mike Fields, Sherri, Janet, Big Al, Billie, Kevin, Doug, Stephanie, Kimberly, Kim, Michelle, Helen, Jack, Jeff Synder, and Jim) who fondly kept asking, "So, are you a doctor yet?"

And finally, to all the UNCG graduate students who finished before me and will finish after me, thanks for being a part of my journey. Special thoughts to Dr. Beth Baldwin, Dr. Marsha Holmes, Anita Rose, Bob Haas, Judy Hicks, Ted Savides (and his wife Christine), Michelle Gompf, Dennis Tyler, Dr. Jeff Carpenter, Dr. Carrie White, Janet Bean, Tanya Olsen, Brenda Mann, Bernard Kiser, Jennifer McCollum, Jewel Mayberry, and Tracy Rich.

INTRODUCTION

Homeric Hymns: Teaching, Writing and Other Adventures

If you are reading this text, then hopefully you are someone interested not only in the profession of teaching, but in thinking about the ideas, theory, and practice that inform teaching. You are someone wanting to explore theory as well as practice, the metalanguage behind the conversation, the ideas as well as the application. Primarily, this text has been written for instructors who want to find ideas about pedagogy that work optimally (broadly and deeply) in the instruction of the greatest number of students at the undergraduate level, not just for a select few students who just happen to love the specific field of study instructors teach. My struggles and experiences have lead me to become a teacher/theorist very much concerned with this arena of university instruction. My journey through graduate school as an instructor of introductory English courses motivated me to write this work in attempt to help others entering or present in the profession to think reflectively about what it means to teach a certain type of student that commonly attends these courses. The type of student I am referring to, and the type I have encountered most often in my own teaching, is the student taking my courses to fulfill a university requirement (not a course in his/her major) to "get it out of the way." The presence and reoccurrence of so many of these students in my classes lead me to think about being an instructor who needed, at one and the same time, to be a practitioner and theorist of teaching. The type of instructor I discovered that I needed to be was one who could find a way to connect with these students in ways that would help them see the value of what I was teaching. They lead me to the understanding

that the first, most important step in teaching them was to make authentic contact with the real conditions of their learning situation.

As I began to shape my thinking and experiences into ideas that could be applied to teach these students, I searched for terms that could describe the type of instructor/teacher I was hoping to become and the type of pedagogy I was planning to share with others through my scholarship. For the first one, I decided to unearth an ancient Greek term that was used to describe someone who taught young Greek children, a pedagogue. Unlike the ancient Greek pedagogue, who would best be described as a pedant, the pedagogue defined in this work is someone who is flexible and adaptable to the various learning situations and students s/he may encounter. For the second one, I came up with a phrase that would describe the type of teaching situation that should develop if one strives to teach as a pedagogue: this would be the Transforming Classroom. The Transforming Classroom is a meta idea for finding the appropriate practice needed to transform students through the learning presented in introductory courses. Both of these terms and the ideas, theory, and practice that they attempt to "capture" will be continually explored throughout this text.

While the ideas for this work emerged from my experience teaching introductory English courses, they are by no means constrained to those types of courses. Some of the practices, as they must be, are defined by the material and agenda of the courses I taught -- beginning composition, critical thinking, and narrative. The theory for teaching these courses, however, is intended to be broadly applicable to introductory courses in all areas of the academy, precisely because the type of student I am using as the basis for this work is present in all introductory courses. On an even more abstract level, this work has been written to explore the type of teaching required to make contact with prescribed students, which I will describe in great detail in this introduction. The ways I made contact with the

prescribed students in my classes and "applied" Transforming Classroom ideas to their learning situation will be explored in great detail in the final chapter.

Contact

Like anyone I am shaped by the experiences that have contributed to my understanding of what it means to teach. I want to share some of the experiences that shaped this work to help you determine if this work could be useful in thinking about your teaching. I want to share an idea about a type of pedagogy and pedagogical mind that will invite each reader to find his/her best teaching style and help him/her adapt to the many and various elements, circumstances, and situations that develop in the complexity of the undergraduate classroom. I wanted to begin this work by sharing significant experiences in my personal journey to this work as a way for me to connect myself with you as someone who also intends to participate professionally in the written academic discourse about teaching (in general) through my experiences teaching English courses with undergraduate students at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG).

How each of us came to be interested in and committed to teaching may be almost as valuable as the theories, problems, and solutions regarding the actual practice of teaching discussed in this work. Each of us negotiates our individual personalities into our teaching style and then into a teaching context. I think we approach teaching best when we ourselves have an understanding of our style, how it works in our teaching contexts (how contexts influence it), and when it may be useful to articulate it to students (so they can better understand how to relate to us in the learning process). "Uniqueness" also happens to be one of the general notions (or meta ideas) that underwrites this text Through many struggles, missteps, rethinkings, and careful consideration I have discovered several common themes that reach out beyond my personal experience, but they also constantly get "reinvested" in

my teaching through me in particular ways. There are a number of excellent ideas in pedagogical discourse that, when connected, help all of us engaged in teaching achieve the best and most for our students and ourselves. I came to search for these ideas when I struggled to find theory that would help me connect with students and help students connect with the material I was teaching (at one and the same time). I also came to appreciate more the individual pedagogical ideas that inform this text as I began to connect them. I was even more impressed with the theories I encountered and embraced when I reflected back on my very incomplete preparation for professional teaching. The constant negotiation forward, seeking ideas to help me better understand my teaching situation and how best to teach within it, was mediated with constant reflection back, going over and evaluating the theories and practices that worked or failed.

My journey to this point has been rather paradoxical. Ultimately I think that has resulted in a text of ideas that will provide readers with a hopeful outlook regarding teaching, even though much of what I witnessed and experienced made it very difficult sometimes to stay focused in a positive way. The situation that framed the writing and ideas that follow developed in a context full of negative and positive reinforcement. At the same time that I was receiving and learning positive ideas about creative teaching, valuing students, promoting community, and participating in responsible public action, I was learning negative ideas about the value of my labor, the value of professors I admired (two were denied tenure), and the value of teaching (which did not have nearly the sophisticated assessment and understanding that was given to other the other elements in my development as a scholar, writing and publishing). There were a number of times along the road to this work when I felt quite near defeat because of the disappointments that resulted from the experiences going on outside the classroom. Fortunately, the professors closest to me and the students that

contributed to my growing experience as a pedagogue provided me with the impetus to remain focused in this journey. Teaching, truly engaging in an act that invests you so significantly and responsibly in the lives of other people, is a difficult, wonderful process. At the deepest, most profound levels, I am glad for all of the experiences that have contributed to the ideas that have been put into this work. I am hopeful that this work will continue the dialogue that promotes more and more real valuing in teaching for instructors who find themselves in environments that have negative or contradictory values about teaching. Those of us caught in such a system should seek higher prestige for teaching in the tenure process: assessment programs that recognize and facilitate constant investigation and evaluation of the complex skill required to be outstanding in teaching; and more active and interactive roles with students, instructors, and administrators. One of the key places to discover why such a conversation about the merits and evaluation of teaching is and needs to continue to be a topic that hovers at the top of the professional discourse is in the area of teaching undergraduate courses, especially introductory classes.

Of all the courses that make up a university curriculum, introductory courses and the many elective courses that can be used to fill a certain smaller number of general student requirements pose a particularly complex pedagogical challenge. First, these courses perform a double task, teaching students certain material and initiating students into the academic culture. Graduate courses and courses for students majoring in a particular area of study can, for the most part, assume that students have developed to a point where they no longer need to be persuaded (or persuaded with great effort) to value the work presented in the courses or their experiences as students in the university culture. Those courses have students predisposed to appreciate and want to learn the material. While some of those students may exist in introductory or "elective for requirement" courses, I have found among

the students I teach in introductory composition, critical thinking, and narrative courses a great many more that do not enter these prescribed courses with an "already invested" mind. In fact, most of them need and expect me to help them see how what I am teaching is supposed to connect with their real, "outside the university" life and future courses "inside" their academic life. If I want to make contact with these students, I cannot begin teaching from the assumption that the class is entirely composed of students wishing to learn what I am teaching. No matter the clever mental moves to convince them or ourselves that they are there by choice, they most often feel they are forced to take the course because they have to fulfill a requirement. This perception, mild or strong, means that instructors who do not want to exclude these students have to start by stepping back (not down) from launching into the material of the course and begin by persuading or inviting the students to see the value in the course.

My Journey

In the fall of 1992 I began my odyssey through the Ph.D. program in the English department at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. I use the term odyssey because the journey to a doctorate degree is an epic adventure with your dissertation functioning as the Homeric tale about the experience. Many dissertation and book writers mask the autobiographical nature of writing in third person language, but all authored texts are, to one degree or another, a Homeric hymn about each person's odyssey through life. I was extremely excited to have this opportunity to teach and become a scholar and looked forward to developing myself into an instructor who would make a difference in the lives of my students. I did not realize that, at the time, I had been cast into a situation that was only vaguely structured and philosophic about how to initiate young, inexperienced instructors,

like myself, into the complex world of pedagogy[1]. I quickly experienced a dissonance about teaching after my first year that emerged more from my confusion and lack of direction than anything else. That dissonance did not discourage my idealism about teaching; rather, it became the essential problem that my years of work as a graduate student moved to address. I began to ask myself what information and ideas would have benefited me the most quickly and the most deeply at the outset of my teaching career, especially with regard to the level of course and types of students (introductory and undergraduate) I was teaching. I look back now and realize that having a Master's degree and a few community college teaching experiences hardly qualified me to take up the impressive task of teaching at a fully accredited university. Even at the beginning of my teaching voyage I felt like so many of my miscues could have been prevented if I possessed some ideas that spoke to me about the thinking that goes into thinking about teaching. As I moved forward in my studies and teaching I discovered a wealth of information in many areas that contributed to my growth and improvement as an instructor. I began to formulate the idea that these ideas should be brought together in a potential "guide" book for the people who, like me, found themselves a touch overwhelmed by the immensity behind the process of teaching. My first notion of audience for this work was born reflecting back on my initial steps into the role of pedagogue. My primary audience (beginning instructors in the university) is defined by its audience (undergraduate students in introductory or lower level courses).

Who is my audience anyway? Well, in most ways my primary audience is that "me" just starting his/her Ph.D. program. You might be someone who has just been accepted into a Ph.D. program and awarded a teaching assistantship, but who really does not know much

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[1] As the teaching assistant program has developed at UNCG under the guidance of Dr. Hepzibah Roskelly and Dr. Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater, a greater sense of direction and intention is now presented to new teaching assistants.

about teaching. You have a lot of enthusiasm and idealism about what you want to do as a college instructor and scholar in your field of study (in my case Rhetoric and Composition), but very little experience and even less theory about what you are really doing as a pedagogue. While every path has certain segments that have to be traveled alone by all explorers, helpful road signs along the way or a good map can make the journey progress smoothly. There are a lot of dead end streets, well worn common paths, and some exciting "roads less traveled" in the academy, especially where instruction is concerned. As I began to explore this idea at deeper levels I began to realize that any theory that hoped to speak broadly and deeply about pedagogy and how to accomplish it would have to try to locate the common threads in all teaching experiences while maintaining the integrity of each individual teaching context, right down to the individual teacher in each separate course s/he teaches. Luckily a great deal of good theory and practice exists and has existed in teaching as far back as the ancient Greeks. And for many of the people who are familiar with pedagogical theory, the ideas of this text will not seem new. But there was a time when they were new to me and this work is largely for the people who will be meeting these ideas for the first time. I remember many times during my development as an instructor that I would hit upon what I thought was an innovative idea only to discover that someone like Peter Elbow or Ann Berthoff had already written on it. Group work, defining and naming, interpretation as an active process, the value of chaos in writing, they had all be done before. When I look back at the crucial time in my career when I did not know all the theorists, but I implicitly shared their notions, I think how helpful it would have been to have some text that talked about the "moment" I was in with an eye towards my future in teaching. That is the idea that grew into this work.

This work is not only intended to have value for those people teaching at some stage of the beginning, middle, or end of their graduate journey when they have first been given a teaching position, but for those of you who have been teaching for some time and are interested in pausing to rethink your teaching and the role of instruction in the current education system. As new as these ideas can be to graduate students first being initiated into the teaching aspect of scholarship; they can often be unknown to those of you who have been teaching at the university for some time because these ideas were never presented when you began teaching. Considering that many of us who end up teaching do so because our department has determined that we satisfy the fundamental intellectual requirement of knowledge needed to speak authoritatively about the material of a course, we can easily miss the chance to be involved in thinking that has to do with pedagogy and the theory/practice involved in communicating said knowledge to all types of audiences. Add to that the very autonomous nature of instructing at the college level and you have a situation through which older instructors passed without the discussion of thinking about teaching ever having to occur. And unless some event or experience occurred in your teaching to bring you to awareness of these ideas, it is very possible that these certain ideas about pedagogy have not been suggested to you or you have only heard about the results of these theories, perhaps in discussions at the faculty lounge about some trendy graduate student who takes his class to Toys R Us.

The paradox of my experience was to be in a program that essentially started me out just this way. My odyssey as a student and instructor of rhetoric and composition began at the end of September, 1992, at 8:00 a.m. in the morning. I was fresh off of two days of orientation by the university, which I and many others found to be unbelievably inadequate and unhelpful. We found ourselves in a large lecture hall sitting in our huddled department

groups as far away as one hundred feet from the administrator addressing us. For the role we were about to play in the life of the university and the lives of students, many of us felt that the orientation process was suspiciously reflective of our worth in the institution. We were cheap labor and we were getting cheap labor orientation, which meant we were getting oriented only in the policies that most seriously affected us, the students, and the university. We received no orientation about what it meant to be teaching at UNCG, what administrative departments were available to help instructors, or where we could gather as teaching assistants to discuss issues regarding teaching. The first was a vague notion in the university handbook, the second was solved with handouts, and the third simply did not exist. Certainly with good intention, the administrators addressed the very serious issue of sexual harassment, but their approach lacked sensitivity. This very uncomfortable and difficult topic was handled with "training films" and a summary "don't do that" attitude that was further problematized when questions had to be cut short in order to move to the next topic of orientation. As with most things, we were left to resolve issues after we were in the thick of things; this policy was not good for us or the students we were about to teach. This situation provided one of the first sparks that lead me to think, "there must be a better way to do this, even if the one constant is a short span of time for orientation." I was reminded of all the "un"-authentic learning experiences I had from grade school to graduate school where it was clear that the intent was to cover the necessary material regardless of whether the audience had really "gotten it." After two days of rocket orientation from the university, I found myself squirted through one day of orientation with the English department, during which time I was given my course and section to teach, Beginning Composition at 8:00 a.m. on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday (English 101-02).

Since I did have my Masters from UNCG and had chosen to complete this degree by choosing the teaching option rather than writing a thesis, I was more familiar with the inner workings of the university than other assistants new to the university. I also had a fairly good sense of the types of students that comprised the UNCG student body. What I did not have was much of a theory about pedagogy and its applications. As I was to discover after meeting the other assistants in my department, many of them had teaching experience in private colleges, not public ones, which meant they were used to teaching students well versed in academic culture[2]. But on an even more profound level, we were all to discover just how different it was to teach in an environment unlike the ones we were taught in and to teach students unlike the ones we were when we were undergraduates. One of the first "cognitive shifts" I experienced through teaching was the understanding that the people I was teaching were not "students like me." Vary rarely in my academic career did I ever need to be persuaded to appreciate material that was being taught to me. I generally accepted, de facto, that what I was being taught was important and valuable -- not so with UNCG students. Most of the students attending UNCG approached college from the basic level of needing college to get a decent job. Their general cognitive framework was not "I love learning; teach me," but "what has this subject got to do with my practical life and how is it useful." This type of student helped shake me out of a teaching perspective that was operating with a serious blindspot, assuming that I did not need to persuade or demonstrate to the students that what I was teaching would and could have value for them outside my classroom and the university.

I had completed my Masters using the teaching track option, which basically involved taking an additional six hours of course work, three of which included working as

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[2] I will talk about this difference in chapter one. I met and befriended an instructor in 1996 who was having a very hard time adjusting to teaching the type of students found at UNCG.

an assistant to a faculty member. I was lucky enough to work under Dr. Jean Buchert, a Shakespeare scholar in an upper level undergraduate course on Shakespeare's early plays. Unfortunately, my work for her did not involve exploring the ideology of teaching. I primarily helped her grade papers and worked with students talking to them about problems they were having understanding the plays. I also taught one play over the course of three class periods. Even the additional course that I took to satisfy the teaching track option requirement did not have to be one that dealt with pedagogy; in fact, it was a British Literature survey course. After that my teaching experience consisted of two courses outside my field of study at a technical school (Guilford Technical Community College), tarot therapy and comic book collecting as investment, and one course at another community college (Randolph Community College), Contemporary Moral Issues. I tried to emulate teaching I had experienced that I thought was good and avoid teaching that I thought was bad, but I had not yet been introduced to the kind of theory that would help me get behind the good/bad distinction in my own mind about teaching. Since I was unable to "get behind" the practice, I was unable to think about teaching as a negotiation with the student audience. For me, teaching was this thing I did to the audience. At this time I was still hoping to find some full time work before returning for my Ph.D., but I was having little luck. I spoke with one of my instructors from UNCG, who gave me one of the more honest pieces of information that I had received from the university. It went something like this, "A Master's degree is pretty much worthless in the job market without high school certification. It used to be that Masters' graduates taught in the community colleges, but now Ph.D.'s are competing for those jobs. If you want a teaching job, you will need a Ph.D., and even that's not a guarantee." Not the most uplifting thing I've ever heard. This professor has turned out to be a bit of a Cassandra, who prophesied something I did not want to believe.

So I found myself back at UNCG preparing for the last leg of my academic journey as a student. I felt very fortunate to receive an assistantship to teach and looked forward to developing myself into a skilled and thoughtful instructor. Much to my dismay (even today), I was pretty much thrown to the lions in that 8:00 a.m. class. In one day of orientation, I basically knew where my class was, when I was teaching, and what text book I was expected to use. Other than that, it was pretty much my game to design, which would have been fine if I had known what "my game" was. As it turned out, the university did have a course for the teaching assistants to take their first semester at UNCG, Practicum in Rhetoric (English 681). Again to my dismay, this course counted for only one credit rather than the usual three (it has since been changed to three). That was my first encounter with the vague notion that teaching really did not count very highly on the university agenda, even though a great deal of university propaganda claimed otherwise. That notion has since moved from a vague sense to a concrete reality, hardened by poor wages and the Tiamat Dragon "publish or perish," which consumed two of the best instructors in the English Department during my stint as a Ph.D. candidate (both of whom were committee members of mine and both deeply committed to teaching). Even so, I still hold onto the ideal notions that teaching is a valuable skill and one that universities need to groom.

These were not the only experiences in the English department at UNCG that contributed to my sense of paradox. On the one hand the instructors I admired most were denied tenure because they should have taken care of their publishing responsibilities first, even if those demands hurt their teaching. On the other hand, the part of the program that initiates new teaching assistants into the faculty has and continues to increase its emphasis on teaching. Within this paradox I began my quest for pedagogical theories that not only addressed classroom teaching concerns but also addressed the rather clear conflict I saw

between the rhetoric of this university, which stressed teaching as the *most* important aspect of its instructors[3], and the practice of removing good teachers on the grounds of failure to publish. The quest expanded when I repeatedly heard that the world of the academy operated on one steady guiding principle -- "publish or perish." The further odd conflict between rhetoric and action in the university system I was in stemmed from the misrepresented idea that the university instructors were there for the students. I myself have discovered how hard it is to be there for the students when I am pushed to write, especially if I also have to work outside the university environment in order to make a living. Students get a third of what I could be as a instructor.

This work will primarily deal with the actual pedagogy one should consider when faced with the common teaching situation I have presented at the beginning of this introduction (and which will be used to get chapter one under way), but I hope it will also provide backdrop for some of the more professional issues regarding this aspect of the scholarship process. As the "publish or perish" soundbite has grown into something of a universal truism about the profession, teaching, as a actual practice (not rhetorically), has become the place to "cut corners" in order to fulfill the publish or perish prophecy. The larger truth is that a certain amount of scholarly time must be devoted to writing, to administrative service to the university, and to teaching. What I want to propose in this text is an idea that is aware of this balance. It is my suspicion that some of what I would regard as bad teaching is done because it is perceived by the instructor as a way to satisfy the expectations of the university and to keep teaching from interfering with the time needed to think about one's writing or administrative responsibilities. Some of what I would consider bad teaching is done because instructors were never introduced to ideas that could help them

[3]The University statement for UNC-Greensboro emphasizes commitment to teaching as a primary concern and goal for that institution.

think about their teaching. And some of what I would consider bad teaching comes from instructors who will actively oppose ideas in this text because they interpret concern for student interest as pandering to the students, considering and engaging the social aspect of teaching as fluff, and adjusting teaching to accommodate students of all levels of student prior experience as dumbing down the course. These positions can and do exist; I have been taught by several of each of these types of instructors. The people who suffer are both the students, who end up feeling disenfranchised from their own learning experience, as well as the instructors, who feel frustrated by students who "don't want to learn," "are completely unprepared for college," and "seem to have no interest in learning for personal enrichment." Perhaps in another work I would be interested in engaging the position that wants to define my approach as a "dumbing down" of education standards, but for this work I want and intend to address positions more open (even in skeptical ways) to the presentation of ideas that will follow.

If Odysseus Knew What to Expect, He Would Have Started Out Differently

Because this work has been developed for an audience that is likely to pass through the same types of pedagogical experiences I passed through, I want to share the theories that will help navigate the Scylla and Charydii of pedagogy (insuring academic standards/addressing student interest, being too distant with students/being too invested in personal issues with students, and exerting too much control/not providing enough guidance). I have bound the theories and practices I want to promote into an idea I call the Transforming Classroom. The abstract notions that under write the idea of the Transforming Classroom are intended to be practically adaptable -- the importance of developing community among students, the value (as the instructor) of being explicit about agendas (and not just clear about the syllabus), and the importance of student interest. Some theory and practice will more

easily find wider application than others, depending on teaching contexts and course content. Any class with less than thirty five students should require that all students know each other's names; it reduces the feeling of otherness that often stymies class discussion and asking questions. This works whether or not the class is in the history, biology, or dance department.

Some of the meta ideas that will be discussed that encourage and permit a good deal of content chaos will not as easily fit into classes that demand certain material be covered. The beginning level courses that provide the case studies for this idea are far more open with regard to actual material covered than upper division courses that often require covering certain material in the time available. Hopefully each reader will be able to draw the best of the ideas that suit their approach, agendas, and context. This text is very much about the notion that part of the thinking that goes into thinking about one's teaching involves trusting in the ability (and learning the skill) to assess what teaching theory is needed to best achieve learning for the students taking your courses. The theories and ideas proposed in this text should prove useful for an instructor who has been teaching for a number of years, but is still searching for even more effective ways to communicate and share the ideas and material s/he is teaching. In many ways this text is written for an audience that is ready to be persuaded, that is "open" to some new and potentially "radical" ideas. While I will mention a number of oppositions to my ideas and the ideas of theorists I support, I will primarily be writing to construct what I suspect will be considered a "radical" pedagogy leading towards what I name as the Transforming Classroom.

Metamorphosis

It was not until the Spring of 1995, teaching Introduction to Narrative (English 105), that I achieved the first holistic Transforming Classroom, especially the thinking that could

see the steps to set this type of class up. Looking back at this experience made me realize that I wanted the term, Transforming Classroom, to cover meta theory, specific theories, and actual practice because the idea is intended to include all of these elements as they emerge in and inform teaching as it happens. The meta definition of the Transforming Classroom is as a theory that connects and collects theories that help shape actual teaching in real contexts. The Transforming Classroom theories discovered to best approach the introductory and "elective requirement" courses at UNCG come from the works of Peter Elbow, Paulo Friere and a host of others discussed in chapters two and three. While each of you may have experience with writers and thinkers who discuss the same or similar ideas, these are the writers and thinkers who actually formed the practice of the Transforming Classrooms I taught. The actual "hardware" definition of the Transforming Classroom is built in steps that begin by explaining the value and *raison d'etre* of the composition, critical thinking, and narrative courses in the lives of the students attending the class. This begins by developing the community of the class among the instructor and students (usually by having everyone learn names and information about each other), collaborating student knowledge and assumptions about the course and what it should accomplish through group work, and framing the beginning of the course with ideas about open-mindedness (methodological belief), consciousness (naming and defining), and community inspired and directed writing (the conference notebook).

It had taken me almost three years of an odyssey to put all the ideas, theories, and concrete practices into an organic model that "worked," from start to finish, within the context of my teaching situation at UNCG. In the end I hope to show you -- via case studies of classes that have been taught using the Transforming Classroom theory/practice -- teaching ideas that will help you develop and think about your teaching. I strongly believe and hope

to persuade others that the current educational situation from grade school to college needs teachers to be good theorists who will be capable of adapting to diverse environments composed of multi-cultural students. It happens to be that the university is the best site for radical-new and thoughtful-old ideas to be tested because college, of all the education institutions, in its best definition and expression, invites and encourages open-minded and creative attempts in the responsibility of teaching. Of all academic institutions, teachers and students within the best places of the system enjoy the most freedom to search through the teaching/learning process to find optimal experiences that will encourage growth and development. However, the best strength of the Transforming Classroom theory/practice is its usefulness in less than ideal situations.

Calypso's Isle

As an instructor who wants to be valued for my teaching as much as any other part of my scholarly work, I felt the need to write a work that operated on the idea that instructors need to address students at the beginning of their academic career with a rhetoric that represents introductory and "elective requirement" courses as classes invested with utilitarian values that students need to purchase as part of an academic experience. For that reason, the first chapter of this work begins by addressing a particular set of perceptions about the university as informed by a particular group of students. These perceptions originate from the undergraduate students I have taught at UNCG and reflect a general attitude about the type of teaching they have encountered from high school to college that they dislike and the type of instruction they would like to encounter. Over my years teaching at UNCG, I have found a representative type of mind in the students that this work attends to, namely students that need to be persuaded to appreciate learning. These students, I have found, benefit from introductions to all sorts of ideas that play with the notion that reality is socially constructed.

The pedagogy that best addresses these students is founded on intersubjective models that borrow certain ideas about the social construction of reality that can help students who see themselves as passive participants in the learning matrix of the university begin to see themselves as active. For students who have not yet developed their thinking to a point where they realize that they are actively engaged in intersubjective experience, presenting the idea that reality is socially constructed can help move them towards types of thinking that will encourage their growth as students.

This type of thinking, for an instructor, can begin with one of the basic questions I often get from my undergraduate students in my critical thinking class, "What does a course in Shakespeare do for an engineering major and what does a course in Physics do for an English major?" Or to put their question in broader academic terms: how does a combination of a physics, Shakespeare, modern dance, biology and western civilization courses make better people -- people more capable of getting better wage earning jobs or better at raising children or participating in local politics or a host of other experiences a citizen may encounter or wish to be a part of. The university should consciously embrace the situation that already exists in academics; teachers are salesmen and women. For a long time teachers have been protected salesmen and women, pretending not to need to explain themselves to the market forces that pay their bills because what they do should be so obviously necessary. Teachers operating at the undergraduate level need to recognize and begin to develop a rhetoric/theory that helps explain themselves to outside forces (the government officials allocating funds to public universities, parents of future students, people at dinner parties) without allowing the basest form of commodity exchange in education to continue to be left in place unchallenged -- SAT's and GRE's, final exams and fill-in-the blank tests. These are examples of the "public" and the other market forces telling the

manufacturer how to make the product cheaply and cost effective. The only problem is that these "commodity controls" turns out a cheap product and cheat the students of "authentic" education. As Paulo Friere puts it, "Authentic thinking, thinking that is concerned about reality, does not take place in ivory tower isolation, but only in communication. If it is true that thought has meaning only when generated by action upon the world, the subordination of students to teachers becomes impossible." (Friere 48) What I have seen (and my students have expressed as their experience) is a vast gap between the rhetoric of the University and its practice. There is a dialectic relationship between the rhetoric of practicality and the rhetoric of romanticism, one which also exists in the more traditional commodity markets. This dialectic is very important because it helps persuade the participants in the system to value what is being attempted and achieved.

Even the most "business-like" of businesses have a rhetoric beyond mere consumerism; the rhetoric just happens to be easier to express when the most important factor appears to be practicality rather than abstraction. We pedagogues are in the market to sell abstraction as a practicality our consumers need. Consider a possible selling rhetoric for power tools. A hammer and nails do not just make a house; they make a *home*. The problem for the university comes when students think they are paying for good teaching, but the administration is hiring for research and publishing. Or more pointedly, the problem exists in the ways students perceive the teaching they are receiving. A common complaint among my students about their general experience in the system is that they don't feel instructors care about them because the professors are too busy worrying about being published. This publish or perish rhetoric is part of the conversation of undergraduate students and gets reinforced when they see their favorite instructors denied tenure on the only ground that

makes sense to them (the students) -- failure of the instructor to publish (afterall, they appreciate the teacher because they feel s/he is doing a good job for them[4]).

The students are also quick to observe that teachers often take short cuts in teaching by using lecture notes older than the students or the same syllabus their roommate had two years ago. They begin to figure out that the professors must be using their free time *not* developing their courses to adapt to a new batch of students, but to do something else. And they rightly presume that it is publishing or university public relations through committee work or conference travels that takes teachers away from authentic teaching. While it is true that scholars must negotiate several elements in the profession, those elements need to be balanced so instructors can provide students with quality teaching. The only problem comes when you consider who has the power to make decisions about hiring or tenure, areas in which students have little say so. In part I think that is a problem of instructors who value teaching, but have not realized that instruction needs to be as salable a good as publishing has mysteriously become. Of the three elements that define tenure -- research, service, and teaching -- I have found a great gap between what is valued and sought by the students, good effective teaching, and what actually gets someone promoted (or not promoted), service and

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[4]One of the most deeply embedded ideas about academic "production" is that there is a strong connection between publishing and the practice of teaching, but it is rather vague. This notion is one I hope to strongly challenge as problematic when it comes to teaching. I would argue that even at the graduate level, and certainly at the undergraduate level, that the publishing record of the instructors is of little concern to the students and even something they would actively challenge if they thought and knew that it interfered with their ability to be taught by the instructor, which it often does. My most vivid recollection of just such a situation came when I took a graduate course in Romanticism from a professor working towards tenure. Rather than experiencing a course that spoke broadly and deeply about Romanticism and the Romantic writers, I got a course on the professor's book and her necessarily narrow (which is what you need to get published it seems in academia) approach to the subject. The reading list and the syllabus gave all the proper appearances of a course that would attempt a general, meaningful overview, but the actual working of the class reflected an agenda geared more toward the instructor than the students. What I have found is that this experience of mine is rather common. And even more pointedly as someone required to write, at the minimum, a dissertation, I have experienced firsthand the need to balance my teaching and my time for my writing. Yet I also know that it shows an incredible lack of integrity for a system to make demands (in publishing) that become detrimental to the people paying for your immediate services, the students

research that leads to publishing. My experience was common with most of my graduate student colleagues: we did not take an instructor because he or she was published, but because we had heard that they were good or exceptional teachers. If moneys other than student tuition affect instructor salaries or their ability to retain a position, then students need to be made aware that their satisfaction as a consumer does not need to be considered when they are in the classroom. It is a matter of integrity and honesty in advertising. My own attempt to engage students who need to be persuaded to value their learning has led me to think about how pedagogy must continue to explore active thinking on the part of instructors about pedagogical theory as a way to maximize their efforts as teachers.

Up, Up, and Away

One of the challenges and difficulties of writing a text of this nature has to do, I think, with the close relationship between what is private and what is public. Much of what follows is not scholarship of the same vein as taking a piece of text or one writer's ideas and looking at them from every possible angle in the hopes of saying something new or saying something insightful about what has already been said. Because so much of what is proposed has to do with the difficult relationship between that which is fluid (theory) and that which is structured (practice in context), the movement back and forth cannot always be made with a definitive "this is how it is done" attitude. While it is certainly possible to speak definitively about what I did in my courses and which theories were used, I cannot say, with honesty, that those practices or theories will work for you in your teaching situations without you first being able to evaluate yourself as a teacher and your teaching context. I can say that if you can develop a strong sense of who you are and who you are where you are teaching, then you should be able to see how to modify and adapt the theories and practices in this text to help you with your teaching. I do believe and have chosen to present these ideas publicly because

I think they have general notions that could benefit a great many instructors. If you have not stepped back from your teaching practice to think about who you are and how that affects your teaching or you have not thought about your students as having some general characteristics that make them students of a certain type at your university, then this text should also help you engage in that type of thinking. I am constantly looking for new companions in my journey through pedagogy, so I hope this work finds a way to connect with you.

CHAPTER I

Pedagogy's Challenges: Crisis Management Teaching Theory

"We are in a race between education and catastrophe.

The Knowledge

Insight to what's goin' on
Information keeps us strong
What you don't know can hurt you bad
Take it from me you'll be walkin' around sad
Cryin' for a better day
Until you educate for a better way
So if you wanna be in control
Ya gotta get yourself in the know

Chorus:
Get the knowledge
That you really want
The knowledge
Do you really want
It's the knowledge
What you really want
The knowledge
That you really want"

Janet Jackson "State of the World" from her album Rhythm Nation

"Academics have given journalists and others little help in understanding the more difficult forms of academic work. As this work has become increasingly complex and as it increasingly challenges conventionally accepted forms of thinking, the university acquires an obligation to do a more effective job of popularization. Yet the university has been disastrously inept in this crucial popularizing task and often disdains it as beneath its dignity. If the university has become easy prey for ignorant or malicious misrepresentations, it has asked for them. Having treated mere image making as beneath its dignity, the academy has left it to its detractors to construct its public image for it." (35)

Gerald Graff from Beyond the Culture Worlds: How Teaching the Conflicts Can Revitalize American Education

"Most people do not appear to have known they had a worldview, nor to have felt in need of one. Premodern societies did not generally entertain the idea of any possible gulf between objective reality and social belief systems, much less the idea that it might be possible for other societies to have much different but equally good worldviews or that multiple worldviews (and views about worldviews) might coexist in the same social space." (7)

Walter Truett Anderson from Reality Isn't What It Used To Be

Finding the Right Problem

Beginnings can sometimes be difficult because they require of us the necessity of making an incision into the flow of experience which often leads a writer or thinker to need to be able to explain why they are performing the communication they think may be necessary for their audience. I want to begin by suggesting that the pedagogy needed for the college classrooms of introductory undergraduate courses would do well to realize that the student audiences found there propose an exciting challenge. Since introductory courses generally contain students from other majors, students who are undecided about their major, and students experiencing college for the first time, instructors face a unique pedagogical challenge -- getting students interested in the material and introducing them to the "life of the mind." Each of the quotations above represents a key incision mark into the discourse about pedagogy. They are intended to help instructors engaged in teaching introductory courses think about the members of their student audience that need, want, and expect to be persuaded, invited, and encouraged to connect with the material being taught.

I do not think it is hard to imagine that a great number, perhaps the majority, of students in introductory courses in every university represent this type of student mind. At least, these are the student minds I have encountered teaching the last four years at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) and the minds which provide the framework for the theory and practice that will be explored and presented throughout this text. Equally important in framing this work is the group of instructors now commonly engaged in teaching the most basic introductory courses in almost every department, graduate teaching assistants. Though very knowledgeable in their field of study, they are usually the most inexperienced, and thus inexpensive, instructors. Yet, it is this very group, because of their inexperience, that may benefit most from the ideas I want to share. The idea that

introductory courses are most often filled with students that present several teaching challenges, ranging from helping them acclimate to academic culture to helping them learn certain material, can be especially daunting to instructors who begin their teaching career without some understanding that such is the paradigm of their teaching situation. It was *very* daunting to me the first semester I taught.

On one level this work is sharply focused to address graduate teaching assistants embarking on their teaching journey in introductory courses; on another level it is more broadly intended to speak to any instructor teaching beginning courses or courses generally required of students outside their major area of study. In these courses teaching assistants, lecturers, assistant professors and full professors will find a number of students that will need to be convinced of the value in learning material for a course that "fulfills a general college requirement." To help identify these students and the pedagogy that will best reach them, I have named the theory and practice that strives to connect the two the Transforming Classroom. The Transforming Classroom is a fluid theory model that is context responsive, meaning that it operates with a meta theory center, which seeks out theory that produces practice that best fits a teaching context -- in this case all the courses that occupy the "required introductory or electives that fulfill general requirements nebula." Because this "nebula" presents some distinct pedagogical challenges -- generating student interest in the material of the course, finding ways to invest students in the ideas of academic life, and showing students the value of developing towards more self-reflection and conscientiousness in their thinking -- the Transforming Classroom provides some consistent solutions -- developing an active community in and among the class, engaging in authentic dialogue with the students, collaboration of student knowledge and problem solving through group work, and active teaching that involves moving the learning outside the course (field trips and

ethnographic studies) or bringing the "outside" into the classroom (guest speakers). These are a few of the practical applications explored in chapter five, where I discuss my actual teaching practices and how they apply the theories discussed in chapters two, three, and four. That final chapter will also explore some of the initial "theory moves" needed to build the Transforming Classroom model at the beginning of a course.

While I'm not sure that our society is in a "race between education and catastrophe," at least not catastrophe on a world ending scale, I certainly think education needs to be more responsive to a world full of catastrophic elements -- poverty, racism, sexism, AIDS, domestic violence, violent crime, and so on. Janet Jackson certainly makes one key incision by suggesting that what people need to survive in a catastrophic world is knowledge, or more exactingly "The Knowledge." She abstractly defines "The Knowledge" as "what you really want" and need. Some of the knowledge that a society plagued by racism, sexism, and domestic violence really needs and wants is the kind that continually proves that culture, not skin color or gender, constructs perceptions of most differences. If people can be shown how to "get behind" the thinking that goes into the construction of culture, then the positive aspects of society can be reinforced and the negative ones deconstructed. And certainly one of the central places to begin exploring what "The Knowledge" might be is the university and its undergraduate curriculum.

The other two quotes, from Gerald Graff and Walter Truett Anderson, were chosen because they too make key incisions into the problematic situation of the university in our current society. And yes, my use of "situation" should be read on some level as, "the placement of the university as a piece of the puzzle of American society is problematic." Graff's quote gets at the heart of a paradox universities are forced to become more aware of as public critics become more effective in defining the university, and generally in negative

terms. Universities, like all businesses these days, are in need of some good public relations work, even more importantly most colleges and universities have the public footing the bill for their continued existence. Right now, floating in the media and connecting with deeply embedded anti-intellectual sentiments of much of American culture[1] is a rather mixed attitude about the value of a college education. Most people are vaguely sure that citizens and the populace can always use to be better educated, but it seems that much of "The knowledge" that is being offered in universities today is not "The Knowledge" that our "catastrophic" society needs and/or wants[2]. Luckily, a number of writers and thinkers like Graff and Anderson are helping to identify the problems and offer solutions. I want to begin here by laying out some of the key problems and problematic contexts that are part and parcel of education's current struggle against numerous catastrophes, the contexts surrounding undergraduate students.

Walter Truett Anderson's quote reflects a growing awareness that today human beings live in a period of future development that is really beyond the scope of any past experiences. The human race is beginning to see the emergence of not just another society, but a world community connected by mass communication, world travel, and economic interdependence. All the multiplicity of rules and cultural diversity that make up and once clearly defined our borders, like lines comfortably drawn on a world map, are dissolving as

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[1]There is perhaps no more a common folk story of America than the laborer American whose practical knowledge and hard work actually puts him/her ahead of or in a superior economic class to college graduates. Or in a similar vein the scores of college graduates who end up working in jobs that have nothing to do with their college degrees, which reinforces the idea that college is mostly play time before settling into "real work." The most pointed aspect of these critiques is that when they find a way into everyday discourse they are devastatingly effective at making universities appear to be expensive playgrounds disconnected from the ills and concerns of the "society at large."

[2]Of course, there is quite a bit of knowledge that all members of our society need, but many do not want ... like public sex education in all junior high schools and possibly even grade schools. The sexual epidemic of AIDS has made it painfully obvious that American society has not yet found a way to successfully negotiate public necessity and private rights.

the world economies and mass communications continually bring us, all of us, together. On large and small scales people are feeling the impact of difference and the sometimes painful and confusing realization that multiple ideologies and beliefs can actually occupy the same space and function successfully for the individuals invested in them[3]. Anderson makes a point of reminding us that diversity has always been a part of the world community, but the ideological implications of it have never been so widely and deeply felt among the world population as today. With television, movies, the internet, and tourist economies in every country people all around the world are making contact with each other and learning just how much difference there is on planet earth. Because of the way Anderson presents "reality," the search today, in education and general human relationships, needs to be for common ground that preserves diversity rather than common ground that supports only one, correct ideological structure. In the university, on the microcosmic level of introductory courses, the struggle for a common community-in-diversity is most apparent. No other courses in the system bring together students with so many different perceptions, prior knowledge, inexperience/experience, and ability about the material.

Graff and Anderson are representative of a growing community of thinkers who are successfully arguing that not only is diversity here to stay, but it is going to be more obvious as part of the social fabric of ours and other societies. In turn, this "situation of reality" means that members of the society will continue to have more and more choice about what and how they wish to believe, and in this context education and "The Knowledge" come squarely into central focus. The problems educators in the university and education at large

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[3]We are also learning that some ideologies cannot fit in a multi-cultural civilization without causing and inflicting harm -- Nazism, racism, sexism, etc. The generally common thread that undergirds difference in peace is that different positions share the common ground that other positions must be respected even if they are not practiced. Hence differences in sexual preference can co-exist throughout the society so long as each position does not persecute another through violence, discriminating laws, or negative or damaging behavior.

face revolve around how it and they choose to respond to a reality that "isn't what it used to be." The first step in working on solutions though is to agree that an explanation and analysis like Graff's or Anderson's or Janet Jackson's is in some way "accurate" or "appropriate." In other words, as models offered up to explain the current and future state of affairs regarding the development of human society and the universities potential role in that development, these thinkers have provided ideas that generally and deeply account for the multiplicity of directions the future is most likely to take. As a result, I think that education and universities are on the brink of being more in demand by the society than ever, if and only if, they can find "The Knowledge" and the way to "PR it to the public." What I suspect "The Knowledge" is likely to look like for universities and individual classrooms is an open-ended philosophy that shows greater attention to theory that creates teaching practices that successfully connect with students. Additionally, that theory/practice will contain discourse that is capable of reflecting on and explaining why the theory/practice works so well. This dissertation will attempt to explore the work of writers who have developed their thinking towards pedagogy and elements of pedagogy that will lead to Transforming Classrooms where authentic learning and instructing will best occur. It will also attempt to deconstruct "bad" pedagogy by constructing a meta-theory about pedagogical theory and practice that is both flexible and adaptable to the complex and changing situations of students and pedagogues.

This first chapter will explore the current problems and challenges facing instructors and universities in broad, general strokes, which will then be followed by a chapter that looks at solutions that are present in the current academic and popular discourse. Chapters three and four will introduce ideas that will help create teaching environments that will most effectively deal with the complexity instructors now face thanks to multi-culturalism.

psychology. feminism. and an ever growing world community. The final chapter of this work will look at case studies of classes I have taught that help(ed) create and recreate the theory that becomes the practice that becomes the theory again towards Transforming Classroom theory. All of this work is informed by the beginning undergraduate courses which provide models for the large problems just discussed. These are the very courses that contain diverse students who need to find a way to connect with the complexity of the material. their college experience. and the other students in the journey with them. While this work will present number of problems on its way to constructing a theory of pedagogy designed to address the concerns of beginning instructors or instructors interested in rethinking their teaching, it is not concerned with solving those "catastrophic" problems as much as it is with presenting them as the very things that frame teaching experiences. These problems are difficult and best faced with some theory to help work with and through them.

Reality Up For Grabs

There are many worlds that compose our world. One of the simplest ways to make this point clear is to look at a world map, where worlds can be delineated by language and borders. Within the borders of the United States there are worlds like the "North" and "South." There are worlds that cross geographic and language borders -- the fashion world, the world of auto racing, the world of National Geographic. I have discovered that there are all sorts of positions one can occupy in academic "space." I occupy some rather unique "space" as a person writing to an audience at a time when I am finishing my academic career and trying to start a professional one. This position I hold means that I am likely to talk about academia in certain ways common to others who might also share my position. Oddly enough. book length writing means occupying a transitional/transformational space for quite some time. Rather than just passing over a problem to move onto the next part of the

journey. I have decided to stop and attend to the problem in great detail. Through the process of writing this work I am moving out of non -professional student space into professional academic space; it is in this "transitional" space where I encountered a problem that I felt needed serious consideration, how to best teach students interested in learning but not interested in my course.

Within this situation, I discovered one of the most basic problems that actually defines and moves the experience of learning, the negotiation of student interest and academic requirements. There is no greater gray area and no more essential place for a deft theoretical touch. In large part, the "problem" stems, as most problems do, from the power relationships involved in the dialectic between those seeking "The Knowledge" and those disseminating it. As often turns out, in such dynamics, members on one side of the equation have the power to ignore the interests of members on the other side. In the case of the university system, instructors have within the matrix of the university system the power to blatantly ignore student interest all the while asserting that university agendas[4] are their top priority. To take this course of action in one's instruction often means masking a prescriptive rule as a constitutive one. In her study of local stories and the way they are formed, Barbara Johnstone nicely explains the difference between prescriptive and constitutive when she says, "Though one can ignore the *prescriptive* rule that requires RSVP's to party invitations and still be part of a party, one cannot ignore the *constitutive* rule that a football team has four chances to make a first down and still be playing American football." Covering material in a course without making sure to connect with student interest does not constitute real learning.

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[4]The not so funny thing about what and how things are promoted in the university is the odd analogy that much of the work in the classroom is like paving roads that nobody will use. Instructors blithely go along using tax money to pave roads in out of the way places that may be of interest to them or that show that the funding is being put to use, but the roads have no real function because so few students, if any, want to travel on them or to the destinations they lead to.

It's like trying to teach someone the game of football by playing with them and cheating. This false notion of teaching and its problems are further explained by the Brazilian educator Paulo Friere. Friere's work deals primarily with South American peasants and his efforts to help them gain greater control over their lives by educating them with their interests foremost in his approach. In essence, Friere represents himself as someone who approaches a teaching situations by listening to the needs of his students and helping them develop better and more helpful ways for articulating and working on the problems that exist for them. While his work may seem far a field of an American university classroom, his insight into the basic concerns and problems of teaching apply in any learning situation.

Essentially, Paulo Friere suggests that true revolution and evolution towards equality has to involve moving people/(students) into awareness of their oppression and then into empowerment. As Friere puts it, "Those who work for liberation [*teachers*] must not take advantage of the emotional dependence of the oppressed [*students*] -- dependence that is the fruit of the concrete situation of domination which surrounds them and which engendered their unauthentic view of the world. Using their dependence to create still greater dependence is an oppressor tactic." (Oppressed 48) Part of the difficulty for oppressed groups is finding a way to recognize or discover their oppression, as it is often hidden or disguised by the oppressor using all sorts of mechanisms and rhetorics that cover up or insure power for the dominant group. Either someone from the dominant group -- who understands how the mechanisms of oppression work but is against them because they cause and maintain inequality -- or someone from the oppressed group -- who learns to see behind the methods of domination -- has to take it upon themselves to educate the oppressed. The one primary assumption regarding this moral choice is the belief that no one would desire to be oppressed if they could see, understand, and resist their oppression. Thus, the revolutionary leader, as

Friere represents him/her is someone who can see both the world of the oppressed and the world of the oppressor at one and the same time and who chooses to work for equality. In Friere's idea of pedagogy the teacher and the student construct the classroom together as co-workers/learners. Friere proposes, "They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow. In this process, arguments based on "authority" are no longer valid; in order to function, authority must be *on the side of* freedom, not against it. Here, no one teaches another, nor is anyone self-taught. People teach each other, mediated by the world, by the cognizable objects which in banking education[5] are 'owned' by the teacher." (Friere 61)

The Bamboozlement Trap

"Oppressor," "oppressed," "revolutionary," and other Marxist terms are words a bit hard to swallow for many teachers/theorists in profoundly anti-socialist America. But when I found myself in that peculiar framework that Friere writes about between power and powerlessness, between being subject to authority as a student in a graduate class and being the authority in my own classes as an instructor in composition, I realized that his way of explaining reality fit my situation perfectly. There really is no context that can discourse so consciously about power issues as universities, and there really are no people that can discourse about power issues so consciously as pedagogues. Being in this context as both a student (taking graduate courses) and a instructor (teaching undergraduate students) at one and the same time helped me see the "reality" Friere was explaining. Both positions afford a certain type of blindness that is absolutely devastating to any hopes of equality. In one, because I lack power, I may not be able to see my oppression (or I may not feel I can do anything about it) and in the other, because I have power, I do not have to account for the

[5]Friere describes banking education as a system in which deposits of information are made into student minds via lecture and then asked to be redeposited back into the bank (the university) through exams and tests.

way I construct my courses, which might include oppressive tactics. That is the real frightful aspect of power that Friere shows us, the ability to deny the power one has a teacher. This frame of mind among some instructors seriously confounds me because I now know that they had to pass through the same transitional space that I have had to pass through. I found in my own learning experience that not all of my learning situations oppressed me, but some clearly did. As I navigated through my academic career, I came to better see the difference between classroom experiences and pedagogical theories that promoted freedom and ones that promoted oppression. As more and more real freedom has evolved in most public contexts, oppressions have become more subtle, and many times cannot easily be recognized as oppressions because the people applying them operate out of good intent. Herein lies a central paradox in the performance of instruction.

To make my point even more clear let me tell you an anecdote that really brought this "truth" home. In a course that I was taking, which will remain unnamed to protect the guilty, there was a seminar paper due at the end of the semester. Supposedly the deadline was non-negotiable. As it turned out, I was the only Ph.D. student in the class and the only student who was also teaching. Since I was a teacher, I knew that the deadline rule was pretty much a rule that rested on the will of the instructor; there was nothing objective, genetic, or eternal about any of the rules that inform a class. As the deadline approached I realized that I was going to need about three more days to get the paper from a B to an A piece of work; I literally needed the time to add to two sections to the paper (about four or five paragraphs) and to proofread it carefully. I was not going to have the chance to schedule the time I would need to get that work done before the due date. Now, I knew the rule might be upheld, but I also knew exactly what type of work would be turned in if I were confined to the time limit of the rule. I also knew something the other students could not see, that everything is up for

negotiation because the same person who makes the rules can suspend, break, or uphold them. That is the power and choice afforded an instructor. The one thing I knew about this particular instructor is that s/he wanted the best possible work from the student. So I met with him/her and argued over which was more important, the rule or the work; as chance would have it, they had come into direct conflict for me. The instructor and I were not arguing over my ability to produce an A paper, but if that "ability" was going to be determined by the time frame set up to complete the task.

Now here is where the epiphany occurs. The professor attempted to deny the responsibility that rested squarely on his/her shoulders by asking me, since I was a teacher, if I would break or bend my own rules. My answer was, certainly, if I thought the student's argument persuaded me to do so. To me a rule is a guideline designed to help, not something meant as a punishment if circumstances require or suggest that the rule cannot accommodate a certain situation. As I said, I was prepared for the instructor to say, this rule is mine and I plan to stick to it. But to somehow treat the requirements of the course as something that "gets away" from the instructor after the class has started is that certain type of blindness one can only commit when one has all the power. As it turned out the instructor "secretly" gave me an extension, asking me not to reveal to the other students that I was allowed the extra days. Interestingly enough, the instructor came up with a solution that fit the "new" space I was forcing him/her to negotiate. Clearly s/he had not anticipated someone seeing the strings manipulating the puppets and who was holding them. Nor was s/he expecting me to admit that I show this process to my students as part of their learning situation. I do show them the power relationship so that I can adapt to a situation that may arise when a student will need me to bend the general guidelines of the course to insure that a student is providing me with

his/her best work. This incident merely reinforced the points Friere makes in his book Pedagogy of the Oppressed.

During this experience, in another course, I was introduced to a theorist, Peter Elbow, who had written about this very problem. My situation with the unnamed instructor and what I learned from it was one of those general experiences that had been written about in academic discourse about pedagogy. In Embracing Contraries, Elbow has a chapter entitled "Pedagogy of the Bamboozled." In it Elbow describes various forms of "bamboozlement" that instructors often engage in when teaching, "There must be many complex cultural reasons for this condition. But I cannot help thinking there are two things which teachers often do that help bamboozle students into this distrust of rationality: Teachers hide their authority and run away from their authority, and in both cases allow rationality to serve as a smoke screen to mask the process, fooling both themselves and their students" (Elbow 91). The central idea behind being "bamboozled" is that instructors not only end up telling something of a half-truth to students, but they fail to acknowledge all the implications of their own ideology. A certain type of Marxist might claim that the great majority of Americans are bamboozled into believing that everyone has a chance to succeed to exceptional wealth in a capitalist system, when it is quite evident that most of the wealth is controlled by a small percentage of individuals and corporations who work fervently to retain that wealth. A certain type of feminist might say that the men and women who feel the feminist movement has outlived its usefulness have been "bamboozled" into thinking the fight for equality is something "everyone" is tired of hearing about or has been achieved because all the advances that need to be made have been made. But the "deeper" reality, proven everyday in reports of wife abuse, date rape, wage inequality, toys designed to teach

young girls that housework is "play," and court decisions leaving women without support in divorce cases, reveals that this time is one most in need of a feminist movement.

The common "bamboozlement" among people in the education profession, especially at the college level, is a general but unexplicated attitude about power and agendas in the classroom. This sort of bamboozlement is most apparent in introductory undergraduate courses that have, as a part of their learning matrix, students who need help with the academic issues that inform the material of the course as well as help learning the material. Agendas are the theory that becomes actual practice in the classroom, whether explicitly or implicitly applied. Agendas are always already present in any teaching situation. It's one thing to initiate new teachers by assigning them the texts they need for a class and giving them guidelines for a course, but it's quite another to talk explicitly about the agendas they should promote and how their individual worldviews affect their construction and practice of teaching. Those are some crucial aspects of teaching that this texts wants to explore. Here is another area of problematic "space" for education because the failure to at least understand the presence of individuals' agendas in every teaching situation and how they guide learning is the breeding ground for oppression of the students. Because of the inequality in power, teachers do not have to regard student agendas or interests. Disregarding student interest and agendas allows only half of the teaching/learning process to occur. When instructors teaching material to students who do not come to that material with a positively prescribed notion of its value fail to recognize that they need to explicitly reveal their agendas in a dialogue with students, teaching will fail to connect with the students at the outset. Then, everything that follows, no matter how brilliantly it is presented, will be lost.

The common result is a teaching situation in which instructors get through the material usually with only a few students in tow and most students left somewhere treading

water in an ocean of confusion. The students do not fail to learn the material because they do not have the ability to learn it: they fail to learn it because they do not know why they should learn it. When an instructor chooses not to take the time to make sure the "cognitive frame for connections to occur" is in place before launching into teaching material, s/he risks losing a great many students that would be able to think "successfully" about the material and the ideas generated by thinking about the material. To insure that these students are included along with all the students that are already at that point, the instructor must step back (not down), teaching-wise, to make sure that all the students *are* starting on the same page.

Before a class starts, instructors have all the power or the institution has all the power to set up the model by which the class will be run. The bamboozlement trap is reflected in Graff's statement at the beginning of this chapter that stresses how the academy feels it is beneath its dignity to talk explicitly to the public (and the students) about the very political and social nature of most of its work. In many ways the academy is very much in need of changing its methods and perceptions of the public since so many more people are now attending universities. The students I teach very much want me to talk explicitly about the social importance of them learning what I have to teach. Much of education, like it or not, is dependent upon public money and tuition from a public that expects university employees, the professors, to help them make the transition into the academic world. Adhering to old notions of excellence that have been reified into a certain canon of books or a certain standard proposed twenty or thirty or one hundred years ago means that institutions and the members who support these ideas will not be successful responding to the new types of students entering the university under new conditions.[9] The problem that the bamboozlement

[9] UNC-Greensboro is a fine example of the modern university, one composed of students who work full or part time and attend school, returning students, parents, and students on financial aid. Simply put, these students to not have the same time freedoms to do work that a student attending college on family money has. The university can choose to maintain certain standards that these students will be

trap creates for education, especially at the level of university education, is that professors end up teaching in such a way that they do not connect with the students in their classrooms. When students fall asleep in class during lecture or only read and discuss the material for the class because of testing, you can be quite sure that the only person getting what they want is the instructor who set up the course, probably with some imaginary student or presumed/preconditioned notion about the "proper" way to transmit knowledge deeply embedded in their mind. However, I agree with Graff and Elbow, who both argue that instructors don't really get what they want; generally professors just get frustrated. What most instructors want, what they *desire* is attentive students interested the material, who demonstrate their interest by keeping up with the reading, talking in and out of the classroom about the material, and even doing some unassigned research and reading to broaden and deepen their understanding of what the professor is teaching.

Elbow shows that bamboolzement is something that the instructor causes and perpetuates. While its not exactly true that there are no bad students, only bad teachers, there are certainly bad ways and theories about teaching. Both Graff and Elbow criticize a teaching method that is unreflective and does not articulate its agendas in such a way that students can share in the teaching/learning experience. Friere too indicates the importance of reflection and articulation of agendas for teachers, "Thus, the dialogical character of education as the practice of freedom does not begin when the teacher-student meets with the student-teachers in a pedagogical situation, but rather when the former asks herself or himself *what* she or he will dialogue with the latter *about*" (74).

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unable to meet, not because they cannot be taught, are not willing to learn, or do not have the ability to succeed, but because of real life constraints. Universities and professors need to be responsive to the changing student body.

This position gets at the heart of another obvious and problematic situation for teaching, the need for students to be interested enough to learn. But here again is a situation that universities and its instructors often feel beneath its dignity, what is often called "pandering to the students." What seems to be at the heart of this concern is really, as Graff unearths it, the uneasiness among certain academians (generally conservative) that there really is no fundamental consensus to be found in a curriculum, which "paralyzes" rather than "energizes" learning (43). In a telling comment Graff points out a truism that is used to protect education from falling into the seemingly utter chaos that would result by allowing student interest to be a vital part of the classroom: "education can thrive on conflicts that would undermine other enterprises because it can make them part of its business. I would not be human if I did not want my students to agree with my interpretations of texts and my views of literature and culture. But I suspect my best courses have been those which helped my students articulately to disagree with me" (44). No matter how high minded the rhetoric of "maintaining academic integrity to insure that students receive the proper educational opportunities," educating operates out of basically two guiding principles -- what is in the best interest of the student and what is in the best interest of the society. It is the job of the university to navigate between these two principles, especially when they may seem at odds or at least paradoxical. Failure to do so often results in a lot of wasted energy, for the student, the instructor, and the university. Teaching that does not recognize and make explicit use of its principles in the classrooms with the students as part of the discussion tends to perpetuate the waste.

The Interest Gene

What has provoked me to write about these issues is the great number of my students (the majority) who have expressed their boredom with survey courses because they usually

do not have an understanding of how and why they should be thinking about the material. I tend to be privy to this information because I have taught exclusively survey courses and I have gone to great lengths to find out what students think about them. Much of college, like most all of high school, is one big game of Trivial Pursuit with students silently, and sometimes vocally, asking, "What's the point?" I quickly discovered in my teaching that failing to give the students some theory behind why they were required to take beginning composition or why a course in critical thinking or an introduction to narrative was really important left me wasting a lot of time, energy and material. Very little learning occurred. After reading Elbow's work, I realized I was not the only pedagogue to discover that failure to generate student interest was causing a lot of waste in the transmission and reception of knowledge.

I want to use the term "waste" in a theoretical way, to apply both to instructor output and student input. Waste occurs when students spend four months in a course taking notes and tests, but cannot answer the Trivial Pursuit question a week after the course is over[7]. Waste also occurs when instructors teach beyond student abilities to learn the material, which can happen in a variety of ways: demanding too much reading, expecting a level of prior knowledge that does not yet exist in the student's storehouse of knowledge, and so on. The knowledge taught that does not include student interest in its matrix is knowledge that passes like water through a sieve. As Janet Jackson's song points out: people want "The Knowledge" that they really want and need. Sometimes people even need knowledge they may not want, which is where college really finds its challenges because students can resist learning when they are not interested. Waste is what happens when instructors and

[7]Actually, this is a failure in terms set by the type of pedagogy that is laid out in the above sentence. I am going to argue that the failure comes not in the inability to answer the Trivial Pursuit question, but in making the answering of a Trivial Pursuit question a value, which reflects the type of pedagogy at work in classrooms that rely on testing for learning.

universities mistakenly believe that the mere presence of students in classrooms is enough to justify any method of teaching that happens to be used. Students become adept at producing material for the short term, final exams, without really having to integrate that material into their long term learning process. And while educators can say, "well if students choose to ignore the learning after the class is over, that's their decision;" that statement masks an unwillingness, or maybe an inability, on the part of professors to teach in real, authentic, connected, and deeply meaningful ways. Educators have to find ways to get their teaching into the minds of students substantially , which requires giving students a viable voice and presence in the classroom. Instructors have to help the students become more conscious thinkers; instructors are about the business of raising consciousness, especially in introductory courses.

Friere and Elbow are but two among a long list of thinkers who can help combat monumental problems stemming from student apathy. They understand that interest, more than intelligence, privilege, and threats, generates active learning. Both the students and the instructor need to have an explicit relationship to create active and "revolutionary" learning. The student and instructor both have to perceive themselves as humans interacting with each other to advance thinking about whatever material is being used to frame a course. Friere reinforces the truth that to attain a plausible and defensible sense of freedom and power over our own lives we must fully understand our situations. To understand our situations is to apply theory to experience. In this way experiences become something more than a mere series of events chronologically developing as our lives advance. They become the foundation or center of who people are, why they believe the way they do, what actions they will likely take as governed by the moral and ethical positions they hold, and where their self awareness develops. Gerald Graff defines theory as "what erupts when what was once

silently agreed to in a community becomes disputed, forcing its members to formulate and defend assumptions that they previously did not even have to be aware of" (53). To do such a thing institutions and instructors need to be able to articulate their ideological positions, what they hope students to accomplish and be able to accomplish at the end of their academic career, and why certain courses are required to help in that pursuit. This type of situation can only occur effectively if a dialectic exists between students and instructors that counts the concerns of the students as real and valid. "A real humanist can be identified more by his trust in the people, which engages him in their struggle, than by a thousand actions in their favor without that trust" (Friere 42). That means engaging a common comment among students like, "why do we need to read about some thing that happened hundreds of years ago" with a degree of seriousness rather than with the "privileged" and empowered attitude that "we, the instructors and institutions, know what's best for you and you should just accept that blindly." Again, Friere penetrates to the heart of the problem, "Any situation in which some individuals prevent others from engaging in the process of inquiry is one of violence. The means used are not important; to alienate human beings from their own decision-making is to change them into objects[8]" (66). What makes academic study and learning vital, even central, to culture and society, is that we understand that our current social, economic, and interpersonal problems are results of historical forces set in motion sometimes 10, 100, 1,000 years ago. To be revolutionary means to consider that instructors and institutions have to work within the range of student experience/interest and our own experience/interest at one and the same time within that historical set of circumstances.

One of the central principles of college learning is to provide students with the ability to learn on their own. In essence this principle requires that instructors give students back

[8]This is what lecturing does.

much of the choice that has been taken away from them since grade school. In our rhetorical climate of "freedom" it is often forgotten how little freedom young people actually get to exercise in the development of their own learning. I am quite confident that even on my best "academic" of days at the age of 15, I would never choose to read Moby Dick, or An American Tragedy, or The Song of Hiawatha. However, if a teacher had taken the time to explain to me why such reading might be valuable to my young growth, I might not harbor such deep loathing for those texts even today, where they remain symbols of my forced learning. While it seems that some minimum of required reading in survey courses is hard, maybe impossible, to avoid, especially when teaching something like Medieval Literature, finding a way for inviting rather than simply requiring students to read the material is perhaps one of the best, most exciting challenges for an instructor. Uncovering student interests before assigning a text can help the instructor suggest why the student might be interested in reading the material. I have always had a keen interest in honor and loyalty, which was my "interest inroad" to Le Morte D'Arthur. As an instructor, one often has to help students find their way into a text, especially writing disconnected from them by hundreds, even thousands of years. To be particularly successful at such a teaching method, the instructor has to take some time to get to know his/her students in more than superficial ways.

Making Right Contact:

The Experience/Interest Matrix In Pedagogy

Zones of Proximal Development is an idea that comes from the work of Lev Vygotsky, a Russian psychologist writing in the late 1930's. A zone of development is hard to define simply because talking about one zone, say in learning a sport, often involves many other zones, development in the zones of social relationships, the zone of physical ability, the zone of discipline, and on and on. In fact, I suspect that the reason the term "zone" is used

rather than "point" has to do with the nature of learning that Vygotsky's research supports, the kind that recognizes that many elements are active and developing in any "zone category." If we were to talk about the zone of a person's development with regard to a sport or a social relationship or a profession, we would have to be ready to talk about all the things "contained" within that zone that affect it. A zone of development does not just work "across," but in terms of depth as well. To be able to do something, anything, one must be able bring diverse elements together into a functional whole. There are degrees to this development that are also part of the zone of development that Vygotsky is describing. There are words in the language to describe the difference in zone development that Vygotsky studies -- novice, beginner, expert, master, moderate, freshman, senior, professional, amateur, etc.

Vygotsky argues that we all operate within proximal zones of development. To advance from one zone to the next, it helps to be introduced to the next zone experience at a level that is near enough to the current zone to have a way to connect from within the current zone or for the next zone to have a way to connect back to the less developed zone. Teaching and learning is about the business of finding the meeting point of these two zones of connection. In fact, in the simple form it is the idea that playing a sport with someone who is better than you will help you improve your own skills. He states:

> Thus, the zone of proximal development permits us to delineate the child's immediate future and his dynamic developmental state, allowing not only for what already has been achieved developmentally but also for what is in the course of maturing. The two children in our example [pp. 84-86] displayed the same mental age from the view point of developmental cycles already completed, but the developmental dynamics of the two were entirely different. The state of a child's mental development can be determined only by clarifying its two levels: the actual developmental level and the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky MIS 87).

His corollary point is just as important: if the zones of the two people involved do not overlap, then growth in learning does not occur. It is like the connection between Venn diagrams. so long as they overlap there is a dialectic relationship. When they are separate there is no inter-relationship. Seems obvious enough, no? The problem occurs when someone is so much superior to their opponent (in sports) or student (in learning) that the connection between two does not exist even though they may be engaged in the same activity. One thing I like to do in a my own teaching is present Vygotsky's ideas to the students themselves. When presenting this idea to my students, I like to use chess as my example. As I explain to them, there are all degrees of chess players from the simplest person who only knows how to move the pieces to a Grand Master like Bobby Fisher. Now, growth can occur "naturally" between players if the two players are nearly equal in skill; one pushes the other to improve and the other always remains challenging by being near the border of another zone of proximal development. Growth can also occur when someone of extreme high skill can help guide a less skilled player by playing and teaching them at a level *just above* the current skill "zone" of the less knowledgeable player. Growth does not occur when a Grand Master plays an unskilled player *as if* s/he were a Grand Master also.

Chess is a particularly good metaphor for thinking about the zones of proximal development because it has something called the midgame. Both the opening moves and the endgame have generally regarded strategies that prove most successful, very much in the same vein as introducing and concluding a course, but the term midgame describes that zone the game which is open and fluid, where anything can happen. The Transforming Classroom theory has a number of opening moves that generally provide strong positions for later midgame opportunities, even if they never get used. These would be getting students to learn each other's names, introducing them to Peter Elbow's idea methodological belief.

establishing small groups, talking about the value of the course, and sharing the goals of the class. Some of the best endgame moves include reflective writing that rethinks all of the opening moves and whether or not they reached fruition through the midgame. The midgame is the least structured aspect of the game; it is the widest zone of play! In midgame the instructor can respond to the unique personality of his/her students without having to rely on structured moves. S/he can adapt to the character of the game while still promoting the goals of the game -- successfully showing students how to move the pieces and how different responses to his/her moves yield different results (learning certain material). In some cases midgame moves will strengthen or weaken you as move towards endgame; some moves in midgame do neither.

The thing to resist in thinking about this metaphor is seeing students as opponents. The chess metaphor is a teaching metaphor, not a representation of the type of relationship between student and instructor based on two people simply deciding to play a game of chess. It so happens that the way the game is designed, as a game, provides a thoughtful way of regarding zones of development. As I suggested at the beginning of this section, many zones play into a zone of development. The pieces can be seen this way and the way the move can be seen this way. Chess, when played at it most developed level, involves moving many different pieces in conjunction with each other. Grand Master chess players "see" and calculate many moves and many pieces ahead in an attempt to anticipate the strategies of the people they are playing with, just as a teacher has learned strategies to helps students develop as they learn new material when students make "moves" that lead to certain types of pedagogical responses. This learning process, whether chess or writing or history, must occur in a way that works with student prior knowledge, student ability to grasp new concepts, and student ability to bring together separate elements to form more holistic understanding about

material being taught. If the approach to teaching the student starts to far ahead, then the learning process will not occur or will only occur in fragments.

A good example of this last scenario actually occurred in my early days teaching composition. At the time I began as an instructor at UNCG, the English department still required the teaching of argumentative, comparative, and reflective papers. In many ways these types of papers represent quite high levels of thinking with regard to writing. Creating a piece of polished writing that is categorical requires a good deal of mastery in one's writing. More than anything else, it requires that the student writer be able to command language to such a degree that s/he is capable of several thinking tasks that, as a young person, s/he might not yet possess: knowing the rhetorical distinctions between these types of papers, being able to generate interest in a topic where there is little or no interest, and developing a sustained idea for an audience that is hard for them to imagine or connect with. In fact, the zones of writing experience most of my students were in were ones where they needed to be taken through these thinking processes separately. The first, more appropriate step in connecting with the freshman writers I taught involved trying to get them comfortable with the very idea of writing. They would never be able to develop the cognitive skill for *creating interest* in required writing assignments if they never had any interest in writing at all (ironically, because all they ever wrote were required papers that meant nothing to them personally). For any writing to be deeply successful, it has to connect with the writer personally (on some level more than just for a grade). This last situation illustrates one of the greatest misconceptions about teaching -- that knowledge makes someone capable of instruction. That is what happened to me when I went into my 8:00 a.m. class in 1992.

I was lucky enough to have a number of things come together to help me achieve the "game" situation where I could realize that I needed to find the "skill level" of my students

(each individual one!) and develop my teaching to help them move into "higher," more developed, "better" zones of proximal development. Teaching in a public institution is both challenging and frustrating because there tends to be a wide range of "zones" among students -- from reading and writing experience to thinking and believing. The failure of most methods of teaching is that they ignore the differences in the zones of development that students often have or they are framed and work best in relatively homogeneous environments. A fellow instructor at UNCG, Amanda Paetz, came to teach at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro from a private school where just such an environment existed, George Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. After a number of conversations about teaching at UNCG, I asked her to write about her experience at UNCG and how it differed from teaching at Washington U. She began by writing:

> I was trained as a teacher at a private liberal arts university. The students were affluent, privileged, elite. Many had received instruction in private high schools which emphasized preparation for higher academics and professional fields. Those of us in the teaching seminar for Freshman Composition Instruction met every week with a professor who believed firmly in the sanctity of the "canon," in "good" books, in long paragraphs, subtle phrasing, and musty libraries. He advocated that we encourage our students to strive for excellence, to model themselves after the eager students of the great classical rhetoricians, and, above all, to revere George Orwell with all one's heart and mind (Paetz letter).

These expectations fit quite nicely at a university that received the students of a certain caliber, well trained and educated in top ranked high schools. However, the philosophy that so well suited such classrooms as the ones at Washington U. had great difficulty finding effectiveness in the UNCG composition classrooms. She says,

> I experienced a profound sense of "culture shock" when I left the enclaves of my private university and began teaching at a branch of the state university in a state with one of the lowest averages of high school SAT scores. Far from being privileged, leisured, and well-supported, my new students were often over-worked, under-read, and slightly overwhelmed. The had enormous potential, and many were eager, intelligent, and highly motivated. Many

> more had been convinced that they were neither intelligent nor capable of enthusiasm (Paetz letter).

Amanda discovered a situation where she could not comfortably or simply drop the "excellence" philosophy on top of UNCG students and still have a positive teaching experience for herself or learning experience for her students. She encountered radically different zones of development among her new students, mostly as a result of them not being as well indoctrinated in the material and language of academics as her freshmen students at Washington U.

What she said that was even more telling revealed the problematic nature of power in the university when it deals with the dialectic between student and instructor. She continues,

> My professor at my graduate school would, no doubt, recommend that I impose "excellence" on these students until they rise to the occasion, tell them their first written works simply fail to qualify as legitimate essays, and act confused and disgusted when they don't "get" Orwell. This was the professor, I recall, who suggested that I teach Nabokov's Pale Fire to my freshman. I did, unfortunately, along with Dinesen's Seven Gothic Tales, Twain's Life on the Mississippi, and Kuhn's The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. I felt very alone that semester, and couldn't help but feel that something was oddly amiss in this whole "teaching business" (Paetz letter).

The students could eventually reach the necessary zone of development in their reading and understanding to get something meaningful from these texts, but the distance (through zones of learning) that Amanda would have to help UNCG students traverse to attain the same level as her Washington U. students in the semester time she had to teach the works would be much, much greater. Herein lies a problem with the process of teaching that Vygotsky's work unearths, the tendency of instructors and institutions to demand too much from students before they are ready, to operate at zones beyond which students can connect. In many ways the ethics of teaching require the instructor to aid the student in attaining the levels of readiness before asking him/her to tackle something like Kuhn's The Structure of Scientific

Revolutions. And readiness means something more than biographical data on Kuhn or historical data on Kuhn's context for writing. It may mean teaching students how to read his sentence structures and how to increase their reading patience so they can make it through a chapter of his book without needing to pop a "No Doz" every second page. That can best happen by slowing down the demands of the reading and using class time to address reading problems to help build up student understanding of the text(s). It also means connecting the work with the student's "real" and "authentic" life. There is no assumption quite so hard to see past as the one in which instructors fail to realize that the connection they have with literary works in their authentic lives may not, and probably never actually is, as given for their students as it is for them. The job of instruction is about the process of moving students from one zone of learning to the next.

As Amanda and I talked more and more about the differences between students she taught at Washington U. and the ones she was teaching at UNCG, I began to persuade her to consider that she might have greater success and less stress if she entertained the idea that she could reduce the number of writing and reading assignments and actually increase the learning curve of her students. I proposed the idea that she was literally trying to force students to meet a level of learning that they were not yet ready for, mostly in terms of the amount of material covered and not so much in terms of the degree of difficulty. I was quite confident that Amanda could teach Kuhn to her students if she took the time to help them fill in the necessary background and prior knowledge that would allow them to enter the text with a firm sense that they could engage the ideas contained within it. UNCG students possess the fundamental cognitive skills to learn difficult material, but they do not have the same degree of *practice* using that skill. Most of them were not in the "zone" of advanced

placement high school courses, though they were in the learning zone for dealing with the kind of learning that college promotes.

After Amanda began to try some of the ideas that I proposed and saw them reach fruition -- more students participating, more students getting all the way through the material, and more students getting better grades -- she admitted that she had considered my ideas to be clever masks for laziness. When we first met, to her, I was a maverick teacher who did not want to demand much of students because it meant more work for me. I was selling out. She could never quite understand why I invested so much time talking with her. Perhaps in a merely esoteric way, I sensed that Amanda really loved teaching as much as I did and that she wanted to excel as an instructor. As we talked I noticed that she was almost eaten up by the contradictions UNCG presented that she could not easily reconcile with her prior experience teaching at Washington U. We shared a desire for excellence in teaching; I tried to present her with what I had found that best fit that criteria at UNCG. The theories and practices were not the same as the ones she brought from Washington U, which, I told her, seemed perfectly suited for Washington U. students. Near the end of her time at UNCG, she invited me to visit one her classes, a British Literature survey course.

In this course she had tried the idea of requiring students to get to know each other. So before class even began, students were engaged in conversation with their neighbors. A few were even talking casually with Amanda. Once class was under way I could tell that everyone was fairly comfortable and as soon as Amanda opened the class for discussion about the text they were reading, members from all around the room began to share their thoughts and ask questions. While I do not remember the actual material discussed, I do remember some divergent interpretations, which caused the students to engage each other directly -- without Amanda having to act as the mediator. Of the many transformations that

occur in class, one of the most important, is the moment when the students "skip" past the teacher to talk with one another, using the text as the basis for asserting and defending their arguments. I could tell from the way Amanda held back from entering the discussion that she was quite comfortable letting the students take charge for a moment. As soon as it seemed that the discussion between the two students was losing its general relevance to the class or it reached a point where they happened to be mistaken about actual information from the text, Amanda reintroduced her guiding voice. After class we talked about some of the changes she had implemented that had come out of our discussions and some of the pedagogical material that I had recommended (I had made her copies of the chapters from Elbow that talked about bamboozlement and methodological belief). She admitted that she still had moments when she felt like she was not doing enough, but she could now see that she had been rushing the students.

Amanda's experience gets at the heart of one of the most complicated issues in teaching; how to master teaching a group of people that include students who may struggle with the material and students who are comfortable with very advanced work in the material. Leave out for a moment the students who may be disinterested in the material or who come into the class needing to be persuaded to appreciate the course. One of the most difficult "realities" to navigate when teaching is the context containing students of significant degrees of difference in their prior knowledge of material needed for a course and the cognitive skills to learn new knowledge. This situation gets at the age old pedagogical conflict -- teach to the lowest common denominator and bore the more advanced students or teach to the advanced students and let God sort out the rest. This problem is particularly thorny in upper level courses which usually have very particular demands in terms of the material to be covered. It can be further aggravated when the university system does not offer a comprehensive

philosophy about the integration of course work, meaning that students can enter courses without the proper zone of development needed to prepare them for more advanced work. Transforming Classroom theory is designed to face this challenge in innovative ways. The first and easiest way to begin to work out of or avoid this paradigm is by setting up a framework that does not reify or reinforce class differences in students (Enstad note on previous dissertation draft). An instructor can help avoid this problem by designing evaluations in ways that allow students to be assessed on the way they each come to the material at the beginning of the course and how they advance their thinking with regard to the material as the course advances. It would help both the instructor and the student to start the evaluation process by trying to give the student a way of positioning him/herself with regard to the course.

When teaching the critical thinking or narrative course, I have found it very helpful to ask the students to write me a page or two about what they think the course is going to be about and what experiences they have had that might play a part in helping them complete the course. By doing this I can very quickly, if loosely, get a sense of the degrees of difference in the members of the community. I also then have a way of thinking about how I will talk about the material for the course and where I need to begin the discussion (to include the less advanced students) and where I need to end it (to include the more advanced students). Another way to reframe the teaching paradigm to incorporate all the intellectual diversity often found in introductory courses is by involving more advanced students in the teaching process. As a student, I often found that my own understanding of material increased any time I talked with someone who was struggling with the material in a stage I had already passed through. A fellow student who needed help was the perfect review source for the material. My confidence in understanding the material increased each time I

discussed it with a fellow student and that student who needed help often listened to me because I was cognitively and situationally closer to them than the instructor. Group work can provide a means to this end by getting students to collaborate their knowledge in assignments. A great deal of helping and learning can occur for all the students when they view their journey through the material as a community effort. In places where the differences are extreme, in one direction or another, it remains the responsibility of the instructor to find the right challenges for the student struggling with the material and the student needing to be challenged by the material. The paradigm to reject is the one that attempts to have all students at the same place by the end of the course; that's a rare phenomenon anyway. The true test in any learning situation is to see students find ways to invest themselves in the material and advance their thinking from the point of investment to the point they conclude the course. The additional test is to find a way for all those different voices to find a way to contribute to the community of learning that makes up the course.

If this approach sounds idealistic, it is supposed to. If it sounds hard to apply, that is because it is sometimes. It is especially hard to apply in teaching situations that do not have all or most of the students at a homogeneous level of learning, the kind that Amanda was used to at Washington U. And the hardest thing to discover when teaching in a situation that does include students ranging far apart on the continuum is the very real possibility that even this model can not stretch far enough to cover both ends, and most especially the end where students are not prepared to handle even the barest minimum of the course requirements. Perhaps the best example to teach me the limits of this theory against some "realities" involves foreign students at UNCG. Even if the instructor determines that a student is not ready for the material of the class, through a writing sample or conversation with the student at the beginning of the course, the instructor can only suggest that the student take the same

course designated for students who are using English as a second language (ESL). Many of the foreign students who I have advised to take the ESL composition or critical thinking courses refuse because they perceive the "regular" English 101 and 102 courses to be the "real" ones. The social issues underlying the choice, pride or determination to succeed at the "real" level, for many of them far outweigh the learning issues. As a result they end up taking the "regular" course and have to either drop it or take a low or failing grade. Foreign students best illustrate the idea that every course has a basic foundation each student must have in order to be able to complete the course successfully (at least an average level). These students are hindered by cultural barriers that must be overcome before entering a class. My own teaching format hinges considerably around popular culture, popular American culture that is. A pedagogue must be aware of the basic starting point for his/her class and try to provide assessments at the beginning that will help him/her determine if any students need further prior learning before entering the course. If the instructor can locate the basic learning level of his/her course, then s/he can find ways to include all members of the course. One final thought, no teaching theory can overcome the student who does not want to learn or who is comfortable not being challenged. Transforming Classroom theory like all pedagogical theory begins with the assumption that students are willing and striving to learn (in general if not the specific material of the course).

In his book Understanding Reading Frank Smith talks about two ideas central to a pedagogy that connects with the problems surrounding interest and agendas: the concepts of prior knowledge and theories-of-the-world. Smith proposes the idea that a person's success as a reader is often determined by the amount of prior knowledge s/he brings to the text s/he is reading. If a text does not touch on a reader's prior knowledge, the reader is likely to find the text boring, uninteresting, or difficult to manage. Smith has found this reaction especially

true in any reader who lacks experience or necessary prior knowledge. The limitations of prior knowledge can be overcome if interest or potential interest is high enough. If a teacher introduces students to unusual topics or difficult topics in unusual ways, s/he can overcome the lack of prior knowledge by creating a high degree of desire for knowledge. More often than not, though, the teacher taps into "dormant" prior knowledge. Whether students realize it or not, they have been in contact with all sorts of symbols and ideas that may not be in the foreground of their thinking. When I have used tarot cards or astrology as ways of getting students to think about interpretation, archetypes, and symbol systems, I actually tap into all the metaphors the students have ever encountered that combined water as a symbol for emotions (in tarot, the suit of the cups deals with emotions and in astrology the water signs -- Pisces, Scorpio, and Cancer -- represent the most emotional personality traits) and fire as a symbol for creativity and so on. These symbol systems tend to generate interest in the students, who (like most people) have an unusually profound curiosity about these subjects, which allows me (as the instructor) to introduce these ideas (interpretation, archetypes, symbolic language) to the students in a way that is likely to grab their attention. Teaching something that gets students attention should never be underrated, no matter how strange it may seem.

In his book Virus of the Mind, Richard Brodie explains why paying attention to something is so important to human beings:

> The word *pay* in "pay attention" is quite apt. As conscious beings, attention is our most precious commodity. Attention is a piece of our consciousness, a slice of our human life. When we direct our attention at something, we are spending a piece of our conscious life. How many of us consciously direct our attention toward whatever is most important to us? (98).

Like it or not, instructors need to have students paying attention in order for learning to occur and students have to be paying attention for teaching to "do something for them." It seems obvious enough, but the real question is how can teachers encourage and sustain student's paying attention and how can students be taught to pay better attention in class. I do it by using popular culture references, field trips, and guest speakers.

Another aspect of attention is "attention span." Someone like Brodie, who is writing about modern culture, would probably say that the attention span of the modern person is much shorter than it was for past cultures, mainly because people have so many more things to attend to and chose from. I remember, in the middle of my graduate career, sitting in on a course in British literature. At the time the class was reading Bleak House by Charles Dickens. While reading the novel, I found that my attention would begin to wander after ten or so pages and I would have to consciously force myself to attend to the reading, which I was able to do. I was struck with the notion that it would be so much easier for me to read large chunks of the work (originally it was written in chapters that were published separately in weekly or monthly installments) if one of my only means of entertainment were reading (it is quite easy to forget that Bleak House was written by Dickens to entertain his audience). But instead, thanks to my modern culture, I mostly get fast food entertainment: four minute songs (instead of symphonies), thirty minute sitcoms (instead of plays), magazine articles (instead of novels).

Either my attention span has been trained to be short or my attention span was/is short to begin with and many information sources have been designed to catch my attention at that fundamental level -- sound bites, bumper stickers, billboards, commercials and ads. Fortunately academic life has, in turn, trained it to be longer. One thing students need to understand is that moderate to exceptional success in the academic environment will require

that they increase the span over which their attention can travel in one sitting of class or reading. Now, I can sit down and comfortably watch an MTV video, which cuts images in segments of a few seconds, or in one sitting I can read thirty pages of literary theory or one hundred and fifty pages of a novel. Academic experience has also given me an extremely useful skill, the ability to read some of the most boring and ineffectual writing and still be able to concentrate on it. This is a zone of reading development that is quite sophisticated, but many instructors expect readers to be able to do this type of reading at a time when most students still need much of their reading to be the kind that they may potentially find interesting or pleasurable. Many of the students attending the universities these days have not developed the attention spans or the ability to focus their minds in ways that are required of academic work, reading or writing. Smith contends that the best to encourage academic learning is by showing students critical thinking through the things that interest them. In that way, instructors only have one hurdle to overcome (the academic one), rather than the double hurdle of generating interest *and* teaching academic ideas.

One of the surest ways to make up for a deficiency in prior knowledge is to make intense contact with student interest. This task can be far harder with a text like Moby Dick or Bleak House, where instructors are likely confronting two vast areas in connecting students to these texts: limited prior knowledge (about the author, period, experience reading material written to an audience that relied solely on the written language for entertainment and who chose to use their free time to read the material leisurely) and low interest. Vygotsky's, Smith's, and Friere's theories nicely combine to address this problem . The optimum learning experience that will help students advance in their thinking from one zone of development to the next (Vygotsky) in any field of study must speak to their concerns and

interests while recognizing student positions as valid (Friere) by connecting with their prior knowledge (Smith).

This last point is Friere's description of the revolutionary leader who participates in or understands the people he wishes to help out of an unjust or unfair situation. The idea of empathy or connection is not so revolutionary; in fact, there is a long standing cliché that expresses the core of the idea bastardized from Native American culture: do not judge another man until you have walked a mile in his moccasins. In a more psychological paraphrase: you cannot understand anyone's actions until you are able to understand his/her frame of mind when engaging in those actions. For this reason, it is important to understand the experience students bring to a class and to persuade them to be interested in the material being taught. Or, in the language of critical theory, awareness of the "other" allows subject and subject to construct each other. Smith and Friere talk about similar concepts using different language. For Smith the idea is expressed using the term "theory-of-the-world." Each of us operates with a general theory of the way the world works/is. And when communicating with others in an attempt to achieve the best degree of understanding with them, it is especially important that the two parties share a similar theory of the world or that they can articulate the differences in their theories so they can potentially understand one another. It does not take much of a leap to see how zones of proximal development and Smith's ideas about reading uncover yet another crucial difficulty facing educators, one that reflects the problem that Anderson anticipates in his statement about multiplicity of belief and how the awareness of the diversity through popular culture and education can lead to unhealthy chaos. The potential chaos can be averted and even utilized when educators can effectively identify zones of proximal development and use them as places for all sorts of connections to take place. Feelings of chaos generally stems from being disconnected; prior

knowledge and zones of proximal development are both about creating developmental connections.

One writer who has explored a healthy use of chaos is Ann Berthoff. She argues that a certain amount of chaos is very necessary in creative development for writers and thinkers who are attempting to make meaning. Her ideas regarding the oscillation of order and chaos in writing and thinking fit nicely with Vygotsky's notions of Zones of Proximal development. However, too much chaos, like too much order, can result in a hindrance to development rather than progress. Anderson, in Reality Isn't What It Used To Be, makes the point that we are facing a future of extreme chaos if we do not find ways of dealing with the multiplicity and complexity of belief and culture in our current and future world society.[9] I will be writing more thoroughly about Berthoff's ideas in later chapters.

The Common Unique Odyssey:

An Oxymoron as a Guiding Principle

The most common of all things to all teachers is that they are unique people engaged in the act of teaching other people, which means they are involved social situations that require exceptional social skills to be highly effective. The social skills needed for the profession do not normally get discussed because they seem so ... well, obvious. Problems tend to arise when something is so obvious that we forget to think about it seriously or we miss how "that obvious thing" can do so much to determine a teaching situation. Another theory that can help in understanding why making a connection with student interest, prior knowledge and zones of proximal development is vital to instruction is Standpoint theory.

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[9] It is important to make a distinction here in the way that Berthoff and Rushkoff are using the terms and ideas of chaos. Berthoff is speaking of chaos as a state or effect that occurs in the writing and thinking process that opens the way for creative thinking by shaking up the order of things. Rushkoff is writing about Chaos Theory, the idea that all events, actions, subjects and objects are interconnected to some degree, a careful retracing of all the events that lead up to a hurricane that find the origin in a butterfly flapping its wings on another continent

Standpoint theory, as Julia Wood discusses it in her book Gendered Lives, provides another way of thinking about the social aspect of learning and teaching. "Standpoint theory focuses on how gender, race, and class influence the circumstances of individuals' lives, especially their positions in society and the kinds of experiences those positions foster" (Wood 51). I tend to like to extend the boundaries of the concept to include education, marital status, age, religious belief, etc. Further, "the particular standpoint that an individual has in a society guides what she or he knows, feels, and does and directs individual's understanding of social life as a whole" (Wood 51). Because each individual is uniquely shaped by his or her standpoint, "there can be no single perspective, no 'correct' understanding of social life" (Wood 51). When pedagogues teach, they must keep in mind that their students come to them with certain perspectives about a wide variety of things, but even more important to keep in mind is the idea that instructors also come from perspectives that influence how they teach. To better understand standpoint theory, I cast myself into as many categories as I could think of to try to get a sense of my own perspective as it unfolds from my standpoints.

I am a white male in the lower class (raised middle class), married, accepting of certain labels that influence my teaching (Marxist, feminist, atheist), extroverted, and young (I started teaching college English at the age of 24). All of these things affect my teaching and strategies for teaching as much, if not more (in some cases), than my theoretical approaches. But, of course, I know that now because of the theoretical approaches I embrace. The reason I focus on this "so obvious" point of who I am is so I can talk theoretically in a way that the "who another instructor might be" can identify and use my ideas to develop his/her "teaching self" and find a way to use my ideas and the ideas of this text to optimize his/her teaching experience and ability along lines that work with his/her particular standpoint within particular, but variable teaching contexts. One profound

psychological aspect of teaching can be found in the concepts of extroversion and introversion. Teaching is an extroverted, outward centered activity, yet many people in the profession are introverted and inwardly driven. They are drawn to the profession because they love academic study, but a large part of the academic world is bound up in teaching, as well as research and writing. Yet many of these people use the most "extroverted" style of teaching, the lecture, to conduct their classes. Lecturing puts an instructor squarely on center stage, with a spotlight beaming down. For the extroverted personality like mine that's fine; I am very active, moving around the room, gesticulating, varying the tone of my voice, a secret actor with the classroom as my own little stage.

Thanks to new ideas in pedagogy, there are ways around the center stage effect of teaching that I have seen others use with powerful results. One of my office mates has a very quiet voice and rather calm demeanor; in lecture format this personality is the mother of all sleeping pills. But he is a master of group work; he sits among students, gets them working with each other and deflects much of the attention off of himself. He has mastered a teaching situation appropriate to his personality. The one constant each instructor brings to any teaching situation is themselves as guide, leader, teacher. Some people are gifted with booming voices that command attention, while others have a quiet about them that draws people out. I am a frenetic energy type myself and I have learned to make the most of it, and more importantly, I have learned to articulate it to the students early in the courses I teach. They need to know that one day I may take them to the Ice Cream shop (if its an afternoon class) and do group work over a cone of Chocolate Chip Cookie Dough, just to throw them out a routine.

Standpoint theory, like zones of proximal development, theory-of-the-world, and prior knowledge, further allows instructors to think like pedagogues, teachers who think

about their teaching. It is important to remember that thinking and talking about a practice theoretically requires movement back and forth along the continuum of general abstract theory and specific application. Standpoint theory is another idea that encompasses both. It also provides a language to talk about the importance of personality and individuality in both students and instructors. Since all members of the classroom are engaged in social action by being together and receiving/transmitting information through language, personality relationships are quite vital. On an individual level I have learned that my personality does not suit all students and that it is one of the things that does interfere with some students' leaning, their willingness to listen to me. To deal with this issue in a theoretical way, I take some class time at the beginning of each course to inform students about some of my standpoints and personality quirks that they will likely encounter, especially some of the ones that have been mentioned in past evaluations. I do this sort of thing to increase student choice so students who sense they may have a personality conflict with me can choose another course or section, which I will happily recommend for them if they tell me what they are looking for. In the Friereian sense this dynamic is one more element in the sometimes delicate and subtle negotiation that goes on in pedagogy when attempting to make real and authentic connection with students. What is particularly demanding is the fact that instructors have to negotiate a multiplicity of personalities. My particular approach to the personality issue in instruction, of course, suits my peculiar personality, but the personality issue in general is present in all instruction situations and requires of instructors striving to be pedagogues to think about it and how it works in their classrooms.

As a result of thinking about the issues of personality and standpoint[10], I have learned to utilize other aspects of my particular standpoint to achieve other goals. Not so odd, but

[10] Standpoint and personality are not so much different as they are distinct. They work together dialectically. A person's standpoints (their beliefs about things) can be affected by their personality

certainly a telling example, is my teaching of feminism of some sort or degree in any of my classes. In one of my narrative courses a student admitted that she thought I might be gay when she looked at the books for the course, a rather odd connection to make, or so I thought until she explained her logic. Since the texts for the course "showed my feminine side" (as she explained it) and her understanding of gay culture was based on the idea that it was composed of effeminate men, then I must (or might) be gay. This situation opened up an opportunity for me to discuss the relationship between logic and meaning.[11] In discussions with female instructors I find that since I am a man teaching feminism that I often have less open resistance to feminist ideas from male students. Many of the female instructors who teach the same text as I do in my narrative class, Kate Chopin's The Awakening, have had instances where male students feel they are being bashed into accepting feminist ideology and have said so directly to these instructors[12]. I do often meet with resistance about feminist texts, but since I am male instructor I am rarely challenged openly about it by male students. When I am, they do not see my position as that of a woman trying "make them think like a woman," but as a man with a different, probably wrong-headed, position. But at least, they will listen.

These are but a few of the types of situations that go on in a classroom that have nothing to do with knowledge of the instructor and everything to do with personality.

(they way they act) and vice versa. A standpoint is what a person believes and the aspects of their lives that affect that those beliefs (race, class, gender). Personality is the way a person acts out or acts on beliefs (extroversion/introversion, defensiveness/gregariousness, optimism/pessimism)

[11]One of the best discussions of the limits of logic, especially where meaning of the words used in the logical statements affect the conclusions of the logic, can be found in the Chapter IV, "Working and Idealized Logic" of Stephen Toulmin's The Uses of Argument

[12]Not unlike female students who have had this done all their lives and histories. It is an earmark of the impact of feminism on female culture that women have begun to voice a similar disdain for being "forced" to read material that seems to be asserting a political agenda that does not suit them. But the residues of gender learning regarding appropriate social behavior still make it more likely for a male student to challenge a female instructor than vice versa. And it is also part of the gender culture of men to challenge each other in socially accepted ways than can be quite aggressive, which is not something generally taught to women.

standpoints and agendas. They will test the relationship between an instructor's social skills and his/her ability to transmit knowledge. Actually, here again is one of the key elements of "the teaching situation:" instructors transmit knowledge socially. While this observation may seem obvious enough, an effective blend of the two often demands considerable training and skill. One of the most common problems in teaching is the unflinching belief or confidence in the idea that a knowledgeable person will inevitably make a good or capable instructor. To transmit "The Knowledge" that Janet Jackson claims our urgent society is in need of means having a complete picture of pedagogy, one which recognizes that instructors must at one and the same time be knowledgeable in their field of study and capable of making connections with students in authentic ways.

There are a number of ways to engage students in thinking about their theory of the world and its relationship to what an instructor is teaching. One way to develop a discussion about theories-of-the-world and standpoints sociologically is to open a discussion about key standpoints in life and how they affect the way the student and instructor think about common categories. The generally big categories are race, class[13], gender, religion, age, marital status and social experience. There are also popular psychological tests that can generate this type of thinking and discussion; the two most available systems are the Kiersey Personality Test (of which I am an ENTJ) and the Enneagram System by Don Riso (of which, my three strongest influences are type 8 -- the Leader, type 3 -- the Motivator, and type 1 -- the Reformer ... in respective order of importance). Of course, one of the more interesting systems is esoteric, astrology charts (not only do I have my sun in Aries, but my

[13]Class is particularly tricky because you may have, like me, grown up in one economic situation as a young person and moved into another, downward class when you moved out on your own. In my case it has led me reject a number of beliefs once predicated on my parents economic stability -- things like every one has equal opportunity, hard work is always rewarded, we live in a sane world where everyone has the opportunity for equal medical care. Being poor broadened my perspective while being middle class and getting a solid education made me capable of broadening my perspective

Mercury, Venus, and Saturn as well; Scorpio is on my Ascendant). Many other systems exist, with their own discourse about how someone can fit themselves into the view of reality that the system is proposing. For the type of interaction instructors are engaged in, especially teaching rhetoric and composition, it is crucial, if not essential, that at some point in a student's experience they learn that instructors teach from a matrix of standpoints and they, the students, learn from a matrix of standpoints. Admittingly some fields of study in college seem to encourage a greater and lesser degree in the need for discussions of this sort. However, while I think there are degrees of difference when discussing agendas if the course instructors are teaching is biology 101 or critical thinking, making a connection with the students at the basic theory level -- why it is important for the students to take the course -- is essential and does require some degree of thought on the part of the instructor. Still, even beginning courses in fields that fall under the umbrella "science" offer numerous opportunities for instructors to discuss why they study and teach in those areas. It has been my experience teaching that students want more than mere information; they want an adventure. They want reasons for their journey through general college and they want connections with their instructors and with the knowledge they are being asked to learn.

Moving Towards Solutions

Ultimately teaching is an interaction between subjects, human beings sharing not merely knowledge but an experience. To optimize that experience for both instructor and student, teachers need to become revolutionary thinkers and leaders about their own practices. One element from ancient rhetoric that can always use consideration in this age of prescribed education is persuasion. What's not required, but needed is the initiative among instructors to become pedagogues, teachers willing to explore and share their thinking with students (no matter the subject) on authentic levels because the instructors are the ones who

have the theory "tools" available to help the students move thoughtfully through the experience of learning. That is one of the essential differences between a student and an instructor. If we honestly believe that reading Shakespeare holds a value for a young white, black, Hispanic, native American man or woman from a rural town or inner city going through school on financial aid and part time work majoring in biology or business, then we need to find a way to make that value explicit and real. If we cannot persuade that student to the value of reading Shakespeare, then perhaps a general college curriculum should begin to include courses on racism, local politics and how to participate, gender relations, and belief. If education wants to achieve both goals, then educators must be able to provide young students with the necessary instruction in reading Shakespeare. Without that development, meaning and "eternal themes" get lost behind a veil of impenetrable language. The question almost becomes, "do we have time to achieve both?" Since university education has become available to a broad cross section of the public, students are entering colleges with various degrees of experience with a wide variety of texts. Daily textual experience for students who work and attend school or are majoring in "non-literary" fields might include reading as one of the few leisure activities they engage in, but then again it might not. And when they do read for leisure, it is likely to range from newspapers to popular fiction novels and biographies, not the best places to hone the reading skill needed to study Shakespearean drama, Elizabethan poetry, Medieval romances, or Enlightenment philosophy. This point does not ignore that students often have rather well developed understanding of movies, TV, popular music, and pulp fiction, but then again these are the texts of their daily lives. Making Shakespeare a text for their daily lives requires teaching them Shakespeare's rhetoric. Otherwise students are left with "noise." Smith points out that "a technical term for a signal or message that does not convey information is *noise* ... Any part of a text that a reader lacks

the skill or knowledge to comprehend obviously becomes noise" (54). With noise, there is waste. Instructors need to use this understanding to make the learning experience more authentic, not only for students but for themselves as well.

One of the most painful lessons I had to learn when truly practicing a pedagogy of the sort that I have been loosely describing was having students either hate or not connect with a text that I love. It does not matter that I know the text describes a universal situation that many of my students will actually encounter or will have encountered in their lifetime. It does not matter that I think I could effectively argue that the writer has one of the most beautiful prose styles in the English language. What matters is that the students got nothing or very little from my assigning and teaching the text. The Awakening is one of those books that profoundly affected me in many areas, from my own sense of defining my identity in a world that imposes identities on me to my developing understanding of feminist issues and the historical situation of women that produced them. I figured that the struggle for identity and the sense of entrapment that the main character Edna is trying to deal with would hit a common ground with students. Well, it might have if the students could have penetrated the prose. Another thing I learned teaching that Vygotsky, Smith and Wolfgang Iser helped me further understand theoretically is that reading is like any other skill. Without the right kind of practice and training, the task of taking on a text that is complex can be daunting to the point that it does not connect with the reader's prior knowledge or zone of proximal development. Mostly I learned that students did not have what I call "reading endurance." Chopin's writing style, though beautiful, was lengthy and difficult for the students. Some of them even admitted that their attention wandered in a single sentence. Others, who were reading chunks, said the pace of the story was too slow, nothing much happened. And the group that I expected to connect best with the novel, the women, mostly did not because they

were not middle aged. I missed those students because I did not fully understand that psychological projection into another perspective is also a sophisticated cognitive skill that needs to be taught to young people. At 18, 19, 20 the women could not *imagine* themselves in Edna's position. The one or two young men and women who did "get" the novel had experienced their mother going through a similar experience at mid life, usually through divorce. Those students had prior knowledge: they had a real life experience that helped them read the novel.

The context for my learning as an instructor has been with students who are very practical and expedient about their education. Their central driving concern is what is the point of any course they are taking and how will it help them advance in their career search. This practical paradigm presents and has presented some unique challenges that are the most basic for teaching. In other words, teaching at a university where the ideological paradigm of student/material interaction is primarily one of utility creates the need for a pedagogy that maintains the integrity of the mission of education while being responsive to the local concerns of the members of the university community, its students. The mission of education as a general experience for all members of the public that is different from the simpler mission of apprenticeship is to teach ideas about contexts common to most or all members of the society, rather than the "how to's" of a particular skill. However, what is not different is the framework for teaching about life and the framework for teaching a skill. Both require of the teacher to lead the pupil through the most appropriate processes for learning and advancing in their understanding of their goals. This argument is the very reason we have general college requirements. And, the best way to determine appropriateness is through constant dialogue with students.

A Closing Anecdote

I remember being assigned the Song of Hiawatha by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow when I was a sophomore in high school. I also remember struggling horribly through what I thought was one of most boring pieces of writing I had ever read, at least until I found a way of reading the work that would *make* it interesting. From my earliest childhood reading experiences I have always been fascinated by mythology and religious stories, the metaphors and supernatural characters. One of the first books I ever checked out of the library was Bullfinch's Mythology. It did not take much reading of Hiawatha for me to realize that there was a whole canon of spirits and gods that I had never read or studied that were a part of the structure of the poem. I used the mythological framework to write my term paper about the poem. Once I found my way into the story and the poetry, I was not nearly so daunted by the material. As I progressed through school, it became a game of sorts for me to find ways to make seemingly boring material interesting, which could only happen when there was some open space in my interpretation of the assignment given by the teachers. I was one of the few students capable of making this leap with only minimal help from my teachers. Others around me needed help seeing and understanding how to put into practice this cognitive shift. I am not talking about telling students how do to the work, but showing them how to think about a problem in a creative way that will allow them to find a way into the assignment. Most of my friends wrote terms papers that they "b/sed" their way through. The work was little more than an exercise in the plastic writing skills they had mastered to get meaningless assignments out of the way. Open space is not only giving freedom to students to apply different interpretive paradigms, but helping them seek out the paradigms they need to get into the work so that they can find a way to make it interesting to write about, research, and talk about. Without interest, every writing assignment is a hollow mechanical exercise that is

both wasteful for the student and the teacher. The students who have not developed or been taught a way or given the freedom to insert their interest into an assignment are most often the ones that do not succeed well in education. For this reason instructors need to think more about their teaching, teach students how to think about their learning, and engage the students at some level of their interest, prior knowledge, and zones of proximal development.

Today there is a type of "mind" emerging in all fields of study, from anthropology to physics to popular culture,[14] that is capable of speaking broadly and deeply to instructors and students. I want to articulate that type of "mind" in the next chapter. The overall solution to the problems facing pedagogy today involve a sophisticated blending of theory and practice before, during, and after courses have been taught. The actual pedagogical context that is both a place for practice and a place for thinking about what the teaching is attempting to accomplish I have named "The Transforming Classroom." The Transforming Classroom is an idea and an action, a place for theory and practice, a threshold, an axiom, dynamic space. It is the slash mark in theory/practice. Instructors of the present and future will have to become practical theorists capable in many different areas of cognitive skill and thinking, not just competent in their field of study, in order to succeed in teaching in an age of great diversity, information, chaos, freedom, and transition. The type of mind I intend to identify as critical for providing solutions to the difficult task of teaching works with explanatory rather than foundational models of thinking and focuses on process, development, and result rather than just product.[15] This mind is flexible and adaptable and capable of finding the

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[14]At the beginning of the next chapter I will introduce a few thinkers who have successfully demonstrated in their work the connections between highly academic complex ideas and popular everyday ideas. Also, these thinkers argue that it is becoming more and more essential for writers to make the connections (and make them intelligible to a greater audience) and for people to understand the connections if human beings are going to evolve culture in positive directions.

[15]This type of distinction can be seen when you compare a portfolio, which contains all the drafts of a paper and the work that goes into it, with only the final draft that has the grade on it. The distinction can also be made between an assessment process that looks at student/teacher performance at regular

ways to make connections appropriately, which requires a constant dialectical conversation with the participants in the system. In the case of teaching at the university, it means listening to the students, not just teaching at them from a presumed superior position. In the next chapter, I will explore some of the theorists and writers who have developed this type of mind in their discourses about reading, thinking, writing, and pedagogy. I will also show how this type of mind has emerged in a wide variety of fields. The thinkers who represent this certain type of mind can lead teachers to insert themselves and participate in the network of conversation and thought that is currently providing solutions to the problems facing instructors in the classroom and the university in the rapidly changing and growing society.

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intervals and over a period of time rather than merely in an end of the year evaluation, review, or final grade. To attain depth in the development and understanding of student work and teacher instruction, you must have systems in place that account for and include the process as well as the product. You may discover that a B product is actually A work because you have devised a way of looking at elements that affect performance that should be included as part the overall assessment of student work. (I will talk more about this in a later chapter.)

CHAPTER 2

The Way Back Is The Way Forward
or
Zen and the Art of Forming an Idea

"I should say not!" protested Terry. "We have systems of law that go back thousands and thousands of years – just as you do, no doubt," he finished politely.

"Oh, no," Moadine told him. "We have no laws over a hundred years old, and most of them are under twenty. In a few weeks more," she continued, "we are going to have the pleasure of showing you over our little land and explaining everything you care to know about. We want you to see our people."

Herland by Charlotte Perkins Gilman

The New Age and the New Pedagogy

The road to the idea of the Transforming Classroom has been rather long and winding. The journey has often required backtracking or stopping to get my bearings or long forays into areas that did not advance my travels. It has not been a linear process. As a result, thinking about the components that brought the idea of the Transforming Classroom into focus is not as easy as I originally suspected when I began writing this work. Reflecting on the thinking that provided building blocks for the complete idea of the Transforming Classroom should help others interested in their pedagogy to see how diverse individual pieces contributed to the whole idea. Part of the problem in retracing the process from the "finished" idea[1] to its origins exists in my mind because much of the scholarship and experience that went into forming the idea have become part of my "way of doing things." This situation is especially true considering that many of the ideas that I apply in practice

[1] I put finished in quotations because the idea of the Transforming Classroom is theory/practice open. It has certain basic meta components, but not a finalized closure.

were written explicitly to a professional rather than student audience. When I teach, I implicitly filter these ideas into language and practice appropriate for undergraduate students, so I do not talk and think about theories the same way as I did when I was a graduate student studying them with professors and other graduate students. At this stage, where I am writing about the idea and attempting to show how it developed, I have a fairly holistic sense of things that were once fragmented and disconnected.

When I was going through my course work encountering thinkers like Lev Vygotsky, Ann Berthoff, Peter Elbow, Jerome Bruner, Paulo Friere, Clifford Geertz, Julia Wood, and a host of others for the first time, I was engaged in studying and applying their ideas to my teaching in very conscious ways, rather mechanically. Actually, at that time I could probably, and with greater ease, talk about their ideas as separate experiences that went into my development because, at that time, they were separate experiences. I can remember reading Peter Elbow's idea of methodological belief sometime in the middle of my third semester teaching. The interesting thing about teaching someone to believe in a methodical way is that the idea needs to be introduced at the very beginning of the course. Methodological belief is a framing idea. As much as I wanted to introduce the idea to the class at the time that I studied it, I realized that the idea would best function at the very beginning of the course when it could be used to set the idea of open-mindedness as a "format" for thinking in my courses. As my own understanding of Elbow's idea grew, I was able to find the best "fit" for the idea in the Transforming Classroom. At that time I could not, however, talk about all the connections I now see among thinking and writing of all the people I was encountering for the first time. Now they form the center of an idea, the Transforming Classroom, and provide me with a theory foundation that allows me to be highly adaptable to and capable of using the organic, sometimes chaotic, and very much alive aspect of the classroom to achieve optimal teaching

for the greatest number of students. The Transforming Classroom is theory/practice for succeeding at teaching optimally in any context because it is theoretically designed to be context responsive while attempting to satisfy the agendas of instructors, students, and the institutions both belong to. The Transforming Classroom is a solution paradigm for the complexity beginning instructors in undergraduate level courses encounter because of a complex, diverse, and rapidly changing world.

The quote by Charlotte Perkins Gilman that begins this chapter carries a powerful epiphany for thinking about pedagogy. Teaching and learning need to be suitable to the context of the world around them. While this may mean holding onto some past ideas; it is more often going to mean constantly adapting and creating theory that works with the needs of the people of the society who seek, through the university, a better understanding of and better ways of participating in life. The "life of the mind" for this last part of the 20th Century and the upcoming 21st Century needs help in many areas -- not just in developing a skill or learning information, but in guiding students through psychological growth, including social, ethical, political, and personal development. Teachers/instructors/pedagogues are going to have to stretch themselves and become adept in areas outside of their fields of study if they expect their teaching to attract and maintain the interest of young, undergraduate students, both for the student taking a course to "enrich" his/her mind and the student who is majoring in that field of study. The new environment around and outside the university presents a number of challenges, mentioned in chapter one, that are going to require teachers/instructors/pedagogues to be more theoretical and practical at one and the same time. The writers and thinkers I will talk about in this chapter are representative of a type of mind that I think all pedagogues should be on the lookout for; as you build your own particular Transforming Classroom theory model; these types of minds provide the best paradigms for modern pedagogy. The theories I will talk

about in chapters three and four are intended as basic ideas and building blocks to help both in evaluating a teaching situation (a context) and determining the best teaching solution for it.

To understand the applications that will be described in chapter five (actual classes taught), it will help immensely to unravel the idea of the Transforming Classroom and the type of pedagogy needed to teach using this idea. Chapter five will also present some of the initial steps that should be considered when setting up the framework for actual class work. It will also help to show what "elements" go into the teaching theory that informs both the Transforming Classroom and the pedagogue applying it, how those "elements" fit together, and what each thinker and theory does to add to the holistic concept. This chapter is written to look at representative writers who demonstrate a "type of mind" that applies itself organically to ideas as well as the thinkers who most significantly contributed to the development of the Transforming Classroom I applied to my English courses. Some sections of this chapter will actually reflect some of the mechanistic thinking that goes into developing a theory that attempts to mesh a variety of ideas into a holistic vision. While process may not be linear, it is, at the beginning, usually done in fragments. An attempt to understand one idea often leads to another idea, which may then reflect back to a better understanding of the first idea as well as onto thinking about a new idea. Usually it takes thinking deeply about several pieces separately before even the simplest holistic vision can emerge. The process can also work in reverse; when encountering a large idea for the first time, the tendency is to break it down, take it a part, and rebuild it. Understanding "isms" worked this way for me: Marxism, foundationalism, constructivism, etc.; all were large ideas that I encountered in my graduate career. I had to take the meanings in those words apart and reassemble them before I could fully grasp each concept these words described.

This chapter is also, in a very pragmatic way, written to provide the reader with some discussion of the sources that contributed to the Transfoming Classroom and how/why those sources were chosen as the basic building blocks for the theory. One of the best aspects of this idea is that it is designed to remain open for future thinkers who might also contribute to the growing development of the theory/practice that is the Transforming Classroom. Before I begin a discussion of particular writers and texts, I want to explore the meta idea mentioned at the end of chapter one: the common "type of mind" that links all writers from every field that is/are writing and thinking at the cutting edge of their respective areas of study. Some of them, like Lev Vygotsky (who will be central to chapter three), wrote well ahead of the times (contexts) that best fit their work. In a paradoxical way, the complexity of the modern man and woman's psychological experience and the lifetime of social-historical/biological growth that people experience in their cognition has been named with Vygotsky's phrase, Zones of Proximal Development.

Other writers/thinkers[1] are discovering that the context of modern life is allowing for general thinking among the larger public of a sort that has never existed in Western history, thinking that is beginning to grasp the interconnected nature of all life and experience (among subjects and subjects/objects). All of this development, all of these minds, can contribute to pedagogy in tremendously helpful ways. These writers have hit upon the matrix for talking about and applying theory into effective practice in various existing contexts as well as thinking in a way that is adaptable to the unexpected. The cure-all is not in one practice, but in theory, and not just one theory, but "meta" theory. That is to say that "meta" theory is the simultaneous look at a theory, the application, and context towards perfect balance. Theory is

[1] I will be taking a look at the work of Douglas Rushkoff, Richard Brodie, and Walter Truett Anderson as prime examples of writers whose writing best reflects the current context for a certain type of thinking (thinking that could not have occurred 100 years ago).

as much constrained by the particulars of a context as reality is opened and shaped by the creativity of the theory. The practice, when and while it is applied, shapes the theory and is shaped by it which can lead a thinker about education to understand that the relationships of theory, practice, and context represent the matrix or axiom of pedagogy.

The Zen Mind

Thinkers and writers who produce work within this "axiomatic space[2]" have an uncanny ability to blend a number of elements in theory and practice to promote ideas that provide potential models for thinking about the problems facing the academy and the instructor in the classroom. Whether Ann Berthoff is talking about making meaning or Lev Vygotsky is talking about Zones of Proximal Development or Peter Elbow about methodological belief or Frank Smith about prior knowledge or Wolfgang Iser about intersubjectivity or Stephen J. Gould about the reification of scientific ideas into social policy, these writers all have organic minds. These thinkers share a common understanding that thinking about any subject is governed by the human organism using his/her mind to negotiate a living experience. There is no final word, only better explanations, which may in turn lead to further need for explanation. Eastern philosophies, primarily Zen and Taoism, have thousand year histories exploring the idea that life is made up of intricate and infinite connections and whole pictures. Western philosophy and science generally, until recently, has been doggedly compartmentalized and linear. The Western mind is beginning to understand that explanations that account for interconnection and look for complete pictures have greater potential for explaining just about

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[2] Space, here, is meant as a term that is both physical and psychological. When an instructor stands in a classroom, many things meet in the space where s/he is standing. All of his/her experience and ideas, the ideas that have contributed to his/her teaching approach, the experiences that lead him/her to be a teacher, the material s/he teaches, the way s/he looks to his/her students, the way they look at him/her, everything is contained that space. The axiomatic part is the conscious will of the instructor to call upon any or as many of those things as s/he feels are need to succeed in teaching. Axiomatic space is the "place" where conscious will can be applied.

anything in any field. The writers I have mentioned and will write about reflect this trend: they are showing Zen minds. The Zen mind is a "meta" mind that practices and theorizes and constantly moves between the two, adapting and changing with contexts and situations, and always seeking appropriateness (not of any one thing, but appropriateness as a response to situation). For pedagogy regarding introductory level undergraduate courses, appropriateness can be found in the ideas mentioned in chapter one and further explored in chapters three through five: effectiveness, interest (the relationship between student and instructor interest), authenticity, social learning, reality construction, agendas, and goals.

Zen thinking offers a profound idea about how instructors and universities should think about pedagogical theory. Here is one idea from Zen and the Art of Making a Living:

Zen Play

> Zen talks out of both sides of its mouth. Out of one side it tells you what you think is a fiction, a joke, a nothing. Out of the other side: Take care about what you are doing. Do it with precision, excellence, and grace.
>
> Most of us are consistent. If we comprehend the absurdity of our personal drama, we are often lazy and inattentive to life. If, on the other hand, we are passionately involved in the activities of the world we come to take ourselves too seriously, imagining that our egos have some reality beyond our thoughts. Zen is singularly two faced. (236)

No statement better sums up the two extremes one can often find in college classrooms. The practice the public knows best from the university system is one that embraces standardized testing, canons, and IQ scores as somehow "real" and true measures of a student's worth and ability rather than as expediencies that have been created to commodify learning so that it can be bought and sold more quickly. The first attitude expressed in the above quote is more one found among the students than the institution. The students "see through" the limitations of general college and tenured professors, which and who often perform inadequately the roles they were intended to perform. General college in public institutions like UNCG has tended to

become an overwhelming chaos rather than a "well rounding" experience[3] and tenure has created professors completely detached from most all students, including even graduate students, but especially undergraduates. Many students do not put forth effort in their learning because they, in fact, do see the misguided intentions that have become much of institutionalized learning. Often only weak attempts are made in the general institutional setting to connect with students' interests or their realities. Luckily, there is much in academia that still remains valid and viable, both in the classroom and in scholarship. This chapter will be an exploration of some of the scholarship that presents theories and practices that optimize the learning and teaching experience.

The essential common ground that these thinkers I will review share is a certain type of mind, a Zen mind, that speaks out of both sides of its mouth. A Zen mind understands that "in actual experience, our life is not only plural, but also singular. Each one of us is both dependent and independent" (Suzuki 25). This "type of mind" guideline I use reveals the common "meta" theoretical threads among thinkers who have found ways of talking about and making the journey from theory into practice and back to theory (in a sort of dialectic oscillation) both useful and deeply meaningful for their audience. The "Zen Mind" audience is almost as important as the thinkers themselves because the audience tends to be the intelligent, diversified reader, not just academics initiated into the narrow jargon of many of the discussions in their fields of study. In other words, the writers apply common language in complex ways. Much of the frustration that "outsiders" -- parents, politicians, returning adult students, business people, etc. -- feel towards the university system stems from a feeling of

[3]Much of the general college course work is haphazard at best. Students can take beginning composition and never return to a writing course that connects with beginning composition until a few semesters have passed. Instead of having developmental tracks even or especially for undecided students, universities allow students to exert energy wastefully in random directions, hoping they will eventually latch onto some major or at least maintain tuition for a few years.

exclusion that jargonistic language tends to create. Some of the common threads I have found in the writers I will be talking about include: providing inclusive explanatory models about pedagogy, reading, thinking, and writing; thinking and talking about process in writing, reading, and developing one's thinking; and a belief in the intersubjective construction of reality. Jerome Bruner shows his Zen mind when he says, "It is the forum aspect of a culture that gives its participants a role in constantly making and remaking the culture -- an *active* role as participants rather than as performing spectators who play out their canonical roles according to rule when the appropriate cues occur" (123).

These thinkers came together in my own pedagogy to form the idea of the Transforming Classroom[4]; their ideas flowed into the practice of a pedagogy aimed at transformation. The Transforming Classroom is an open theoretical model, meaning that its practical application comes out of negotiation with its context, with "context" being the type of students being taught, the material of the course, the university requirements, and any other factors that could potentially and significantly contribute to the shape of a teaching situation. The Transforming Classroom, as an idea, as theory, is like clay. It has form and content, but that form and content can be molded to fit in any hole. In other words, it is not predetermined square and thus in need of only square holes; but it does have a solidity that exists by virtue of the theories that comprise it.

Modern Western Zen Minds: Richard Brodie, Douglas Rushkoff and Walter Truett Anderson

As I suggested earlier, the pedagogue of the present and future, will have be skillful in his/her thinking in many areas besides his/her field of knowledge. Many of these areas where

[4] The Transforming Classroom will be discussed more in chapter 4 and "demonstrated" in chapter 5

pedagogues need to have knowledge beyond their field of study[5] are predicated by a diverse and complicated world. Many of these areas are also predicated on the unique role that the pedagogue plays in society and his/her relationship with students. Even more important than diversity in thinking is the extremely powerful cognitive ability to bring diverse information and ideas into a focus that not only sees interconnection, but can communicate that understanding to learning minds. Douglas Rushkoff, Walter Truett Anderson and Richard Brodie represent writers who are attempting to target an intelligent, but not necessarily specialized audience. In many ways the very audience that instructors encounter in undergraduate classes. The works of these writers demonstrate some of the rhetorical moves that can be useful to introduce and invite an uninitiated audience into the world of intellectual thinking. Unlike the writers who will be discussed later, who write to more specific and specialized audiences (but who still show the Zen type of mind), these writers are concerned with an audience that they will have to persuade to buy their books, usually on the merits of the cover of the book and the first few sentences of the first page. The only difference in the audience in the bookstore and the audience of an undergraduate course taking a general college requirement is that the first can put the book back and leave the store while the second is in a situation where s/he must, one way or another (in one semester or another), fulfill the requirement. Of course, students can vacate the class mentally if they do not feel that the work of the class is connecting with them. In either case, the writer or the teacher has failed to make a sell. The ideas do not get communicated and the audience does not learn.

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[5] Some key fields that tremendously help a teacher thinking about his/her teaching would include psychology (especially cognitive development), communication (especially interpersonal relationship skills), history (especially theory about how history is constructed by writers), science (especially works popularizing Chaos theory and Complexity), anthropology (especially enthnographies) and biology (especially gender studies).

Transforming Classroom theory is as concerned as these writers with making the most effective, quickest connections with the audience. The techniques of a writer attempting to popularize difficult ideas and a pedagogue attempting to initiate students into the academy are the same because of the cognitive similarity of the audiences that Brodie, Rushkoff, and Anderson are trying to attract and the ones that instructors encounter the first day of class. Students in universities and patrons of bookstores share the cognitive desire to learn more about the world around them. For that learning to take place the student and the reader have to feel like they can manage the texts they encounter: they have to feel connected to the experience in some meaningful way. All three of the writers and the publishers have produced books that will hopefully attract a reader to take the book off the shelf, read the back cover, and open it up. Once inside, they hope that the table of contents or the opening sentences will entice the reader to give the book serious consideration and then to purchase it. The book cover idea applies equally well to the appearance and presentation of the instructor the first few days of class. Appearance can invite students or it can stand them off. The instructors I warmed up to the fastest when I was an undergraduate usually dressed casually, but professionally. They appeared more open by the way they presented themselves and that made me more likely to be drawn into the class. The suit and tie professor sent me a clear signal that s/he was from one world and I was from another and never the two shall cross. Transforming Classroom theory accounts for the whole teaching dynamic, including introductions and appearances and how those things affect student perceptions at the beginning.

Richard Brodie's Virus of the Mind, Douglas Rushkoff's Media Virus, and Walter Truett Anderson's Reality Isn't What It Used To Be all have an appearance designed to catch a browser's eye. Since they are attempting to popularize complex ideas, their works think about and try to become a part of popular culture. Brodie's book, published in 1996, has a solid

white cover with iridescent red ink spelling out the title. The title of the book is on the spine and just below it (in the middle) is a syringe. If you look closely at the syringe you can see the symbol for CNN, GE, Mercedes, MTV, IBM and McDonalds inside being pushed down through the needle. If this symbol and color scheme and title prove to be enough to get a browser to pull the book off the shelf, then the front cover is even more intriguing. In the center of the all white cover is brain with a syringe stuck in it. There are a number of symbols on/in the brain -- Coca-Cola, AT&T, ABC, FBI, etc. -- and a number of symbols on/in the syringe -- McDonalds, CNN, MTV, etc.. Underneath the brain is a subtitle for the book: "The Science of the Meme." If the person turns the book over, s/he will find not only the usual supportive quote, but a few new ideas. In the center of the back cover is a red box with "Warning!" at the top in red also. Beneath the "Warning!" is the actual warning, which reads:

> This book contains a live mind virus. Do not read this book unless you are willing to be infected. The infection may affect the way you think in subtle and not-so-subtle ways, or even turn your current world view inside out.

Beneath that Brodie includes a series of questions and the page numbers with the answers -- "Are viruses of the mind potentially more dangerous than the familiar kind? (p. 17)," "What are *profit viruses* and what businesses are already using them to stun their competition? (p. 201)," and "What's happening to our sex drives? (120)." Front, side, and back, the book is calling for the attention of the browser. The back even directs the reader to the pages s/he should look at first. This virus has a good shell, meaning that its design is likely to increase its chances of spreading (getting pulled off the shelf and looked at, and maybe even bought).

Rushkoff's (1994) and Anderson's (1990) books are the same way. All three books, by their outward appearance, share a common assumption: packaging is as important as what is being packaged. Not only does an idea have to be good, it has to "look" good. These authors and their publishers operate with this assumption clearly in their minds. As Brodie

points out in his book, the idea of memetics has been around for some time and a number of books have been written on the idea. He is concerned with what it takes to get someone to buy his book instead of someone else's. The initial way to get someone's attention is in the rhetorical packaging of the idea. He gives two sample paragraphs that communicate the same information differently, one though is clearly written to an audience already interested or initiated in the idea of memetics and the other is clearly written to catch an audience that might not yet be persuaded to read his book.

> *Introduction to Memetics* is a compilation of ideas on the science of memetics. Each chapter summarizes a different topic in this field. Included are examples of how memetics impacts people's lives, illustrates historical data, and offers choices for the future.
>
> or
>
> *Virus of the Mind* exposes the imminent crisis of the dangerous new technology know as *memetics*. What is it and how can we guard against its harmful effects? Our only chance is to have everyone read *Virus of the Mind* before it is too late! (89)

As an audience initiated into language of the kind in the first quote, I actually find that one more attractive. But I would have to agree with Brodie that "a common reaction would be to fall asleep halfway through the first paragraph and to pay much more attention to the second" (90) if I were dealing with his target audience. I also happen to think that most undergraduates would probably be drawn the second quote as well, which is one reason I have chosen to introduce Brodie, Anderson, and Rushkoff at the beginning of this chapter. However, as Brodie notes, if, while reading the second paragraph, the reader feels skeptical about its claims, it is because s/he has programmed a "*skepticism* strategy-meme" into his/her thinking (91). That person may, as a result, find the first paragraph more interesting. I am skeptical of this idea because my interest in the first paragraph has developed beyond a mere reaction against

the second. As a scholar I am genuinely attracted to a rhetorical approach that represents a more precise introduction to the material that is to follow.

Brodie's example here, though, illustrates a useful point for thinking about pedagogy at introductory and lower level undergraduate courses and contains an idea central to the Transforming Classroom -- how things get presented affects whether or not they get someone's attention. Without attention, books do not get bought and ideas do not get communicated. At higher levels of learning, say upper level undergraduate courses and in graduate studies, interest can often be taken as a given. I can definitively say which example I would choose if I were going to teach about memetics to undergraduate students, especially if I wanted to pitch the idea to freshman and sophomore students, and which example I would choose if I were going to teach memetic theory to graduate students. While the second example may catch my attention most quickly, as professional in the field of rhetoric and thinking (and someone trained to be skeptical of doomsday rhetoric), the first example is more likely to *sustain* my attention. As a pedagogue though I must apply smart teaching theory in selecting the text appropriate to the audience before me. A great deal more failure in teaching comes from poor packaging or misappropriate material for the audience than people might realize. Teachers have to keep in mind that if they fail to get students' attention, they will have nothing to sustain. Those first few days in an introductory class, in Transforming Classroom theory, are as crucial as the cover design of Rushkoff's, Anderson's and Brodie's books.

As an instructor interested in getting students' attention within the first few days of a course, I have developed strategies in same vein as the strategies of these book covers. And I have developed them the same way as book companies probably have, market research. When I first began teaching at Randolph Community College in 1992, I felt the need to distinguish myself from the students through my clothes. I wore slacks, a dress shirt and a tie. I kept my

distance from the students and represented myself as a "professional." As I gained more practice in teaching (through my assistantship at UNCG -- 1992-1996), I began to realize that more and more learning occurred for students at the undergraduate level when I eliminated some of the barriers that a certain type of appearance created. I began to dress for class more casually and I began to share more of myself with the students: my opinions, my interests, some aspects of my private life (stories about my childhood, my marriage, my friends). I began to notice higher attendance, better evaluations, and greater retention of ideas among the students as I embraced more and more of the social aspects of teaching. I also discovered that, like the bright colors on the book covers, certain, unconventional behavior not only got student attention from the beginning, but could be used to sustain it over the period of a semester. Like the authors of these books, once they had my attention and I had the attention of my students, they and I could begin arguing and presenting ideas. While a certain degree of flair suits me personally, the underlying principle in this portion of the theory has to do with authenticity. Students know if an instructor authentically cares about their learning and they will work hard for the instructors that does. Young students especially are often looking for social connections at the same time that they are attempting to learn academic ideas; they want to know or perceive ways that they can connect with the material and the instructor. This is why I want to introduce Brodie, Anderson, and Rushkoff at this point; their ideas attempt a bridge at the point where most undergraduates are beginning to cross over into academic study.

Once a reader opens one of their books, the authors have to find some rhetorical way of sustaining the interest of the reader, ultimately to the point where the reader purchases the book and takes it home. Usually this process towards sustained attention begins in the table of contents. For the pedagogue this would be the syllabus for the class. Brodie's book deals with memetics and the spread of memes (a jargonistic term for ideas, which sounds pretty trendy

and will likely help in spreading the word itself). His contention, and that of Rushkoff as well, is that memes are like DNA or any genetic material interested in replicating itself. As it so happens all genetic material is by existence, interested in replicating itself. And really, the only measure of goodness and badness in terms of genetic material is whether or not the material gets itself replicated. The genetic material for blond hair does not concern itself with the religion of the person, the person's personal habits, or the person's favorite flavor of ice cream; it just wants to keep on keeping on. Whatever keeps the genetic material going is good. If something develops to cause blond hair to interfere with the replication process, that genetic material will be weeded out in favor of whatever material keeps things going, maybe red hair. Ideas work the same way. At the most basic level, replication and spread of the idea is the way an idea stays *alive*. It does not matter if the idea is good (equal rights) or bad (racism), only that it keeps on keeping on. Key to Brodie's argument is the important difference between genetic material and ideas (memes). Genetic material phases in and out over huge periods of time and with no conscious will to survive. Ideas (memes) are another matter. Whether a politician has blond hair or brown hair is really not of too much concern when deciding policy, but if that politician feels that certain ethnic groups are inferior and s/he is in charge of making laws that will affect those groups, then that is an idea (meme) that greatly affects other people's lives immediately. Because it is an idea, rather than genetic material, it is very capable of being changed or challenged.[6] Memetics offers a solid explanation for why so many bad ideas continue to exist; they are and have good memes. They are very capable of spreading themselves, just like viruses.

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[6] While it is true that science is making all sorts of breakthroughs in terms of manipulating genetic material, they are still some time away from being able to do so on the same scale that a politician can manipulate an idea.

The reason for introducing something like memetics to undergraduate students is the understanding it provides about how ideas/memes spread and why to resist some and embrace others. My height, eye color, hand size pretty much happen to me and, at a young age, so do many ideas (the things that mark me as a member of American culture). However, because ideas/memes operate the way they do, as part of a huge, constructed intersubjective reality, they can eventually be understood, even broken down, and taken apart. I can "get behind" the idea of individualism in America, but it's rather hard for me to get behind the fact that I have five toes on each foot. Enter yet another significant aspect of the Transforming Classroom theory. First, good ideas depend on successfully spreading them, which means being aware of not only the goodness of the idea, but how to communicate it to a student audience. And second, bad ideas get along just fine, especially if the viral shell is particularly good at attaching itself to people's minds, which means that pedagogy cannot afford to simply write off a bad idea without understanding why it persists so well. Whenever I teach feminism in my classes and the class gets around to the topic of rape, inevitably I have a couple of female students who do believe that the way a woman dresses and acts makes her responsible for being raped. The meme that suggests that the way a woman dresses actually permits her getting raped continues to have considerable staying power in the minds of many women. Getting behind this meme means understanding the meme in the first place and then breaking it down.[7] One cannot cure a disease without first understanding how the disease operates and spreads.

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[7] To get behind this particular attitude about the cause of rape, I try to help these students understand the implications of their position. If it is actually true that men exist who cannot control themselves because of the way a woman dresses, then society needs to take a number of legal actions. First it needs to be able to effectively identify any and all clothes that may lead to this behavior and eliminate their manufacture. The question that follows though is how does one determine the criteria for such action. These students begin to see how hard it is to readily identify the "dangerous clothes." Secondly, if there are men that do not rape women who dress seductively and there are men that do, society would still want to remove those men from public life; they are dangerous because they have no self control. After

For bad ideas and good ideas to exist simultaneously, there has to be a massive and complex system that can be healthy in some areas and diseased in others. The overall system is quite resistant to infection that could destroy it entirely, but like the human body which houses a number of parasites, the human mind can sustain contradictory, paradoxical, and harmful memes along side healthy, cohesive, and positive memes. The meme environment is that large and complex. A Klansman can be a good worker at his job. Like Brodie, Douglas Rushkoff uses the viral metaphor to describe the spread of ideas. In his book, Rushkoff describes the memetic environment as the "datasphere." The datasphere would describe every element of public and personal communication, from television to telephone conversations, newspapers, video games, books, billboards, college classrooms, waiting rooms in doctor's offices, and on ad infinitum. Rushkoff's great insight is to understand and argue that the datasphere is a living organism. It has a stasis, grows and changes, it has to be constantly fed and it can get infected. Unlike a biological organism the datasphere feeds on memes, "conceptual equivalents" of genes. (10). The datasphere of America has a genetic makeup as defined by any number of thousands of memes -- the right to bear arms, individualism, capitalism, freedom of speech, pro-life/pro-choice, etc. And as an organism, it can be attacked by viruses. A media virus acts exactly the same as a biological virus Rushkoff argues:

> The 'protein shell' of a media virus might be an event, invention, technology, system of thought, musical riff, visual image, scientific theory, sex scandal, clothing style or even pop hero -- as long as it can catch our attention. Any one of these media virus shells will search out the receptive nooks and crannies in popular culture and stick on anywhere it is noticed. Once attached, the virus injects its more hidden agendas into the datastream in the form of *ideological code* -- not genes, but a conceptual equivalent we now call 'memes.' Like real genetic material, these memes infiltrate the way we do business, educate ourselves, interact with one another -- even the way we perceive reality. (10)

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some discussion, I can usually unhinge this rape myth and replace with explanations that more effectively explain rape.

This description of the way new ideas function in the datasphere may seem a bit negative since a virus is generally considered something that disrupts the normal activity of an organism, but Rushkoff puts an unexpected positive spin on the virus concept. He argues that viruses are the very things in any system that allow thinkers about that system to begin to formulate an idea of what is normal and healthy. Also, the viruses can be the very thing to help boost a system to better health or make it aware of its weaknesses. This biological model for describing media and informational space is quite revolutionary. It certainly yanks the ideological carpet from beneath objectivity. A living organism has no finality; it is always process, growing and changing.

If education is seen as part of the overall matrix of the datasphere, an arm or foot or better, the head, then it is just as intertwined in the health of the entire organism. What Rushkoff's book demonstrates as he moves chapter to chapter from mainstream media (TV, newsstand magazines, and popular radio) to the more virulent strains of underground media (independent films, zines, and public radio) is the growing interconnectedness of all levels of information experience. In about the middle of his book Rushkoff quotes Japhet Asher, a British documentary filmmaker and creator of MTV's Liquid Television, a "weekly foray into the world of animation specifically designed to deconstruct and parody media and popular culture" who points out that "'Today there is such a bombardment of information in daily life that people have to evolve, get used to it, and survive it. Editing is a great function of life. People have to learn how to control their own destiny; you have to learn to think for yourself. You have to be prepared to accept that things are changing, and have fluid thought, or you'll be in trouble'" (151). Instructors are all about the business of deciding what is the most valuable and important information to teach. That decision, especially at the undergraduate level, should be based upon a responsiveness to current culture. Like the laws of Herland,

pedagogical theory should reflect the changes of each new generation and the unique problems facing people bombarded by memes competing for their attention (including educators teaching subjects at colleges) Pedagogues need to teach students how to become "fluid thinkers" and the instructors need to understand it themselves. A "fluid thinker," a "Zen mind," and "a pedagogue" are just different terms for the same concept. These terms can be used interchangeably to describe someone engaged in holistic thinking, only the pedagogue has a specific cultural function -- to teach. Transforming Classroom theory/approach developed out of the need for teaching to be, to some considerable degree, guided by current contexts, experiences, expectations, "realities," and knowledge.

It may appear that Rushkoff's book is trapped by its own popular culture agenda, certainly new ideas and movement in the datasphere will replace many of the examples he sights in his book. Already, the Rodney King trial has been replaced by the crash of the ValueJet plane in Florida and the bombing of TWA flight 808. But in actuality his book, like Anderson's, captures the emergent time of the spreading modern culture and ferrets out the underlying meta ideology that informs each of the popular examples he uses. Madonna, Michael Jordan, and Michael Jackson may come and go with other popular icons, but the space for popular icons is here to stay. What Rushkoff, Anderson, and Brodie all reveal on the grand scale is that the Pandora's box of information overload and choice is open and there will be no shutting it. People are going to have to find ways to deal with many things demanding their attention, time, and money. Therein lies the new and old path of pedagogy and the institution of education, assuming educators are willing to take up the new struggle. As Anderson reveals in his work Reality Isn't What It Used To Be, that struggle will be extremely challenging.

The title of the book immediately got my interest up, but so did the front cover, which had several little boxes that described the contents of the text -- "theatrical politics, ready-to-

wear religion, global myths, primitive chic, and other wonders of the postmodern world." As I thumbed my way into the table of contents, I found even more interesting titles among the sections and chapters of the book. Part one dealt with "The Collapse of Belief" and had two chapters, "Welcome to the Postmodern World" and "To See the Wizard." Part Three was the section that interested me the most since it focused on "The Theater of Reality" with chapters on "Making Belief and Making Believe," "Being Someone: The Construction of Personal Reality" and "Democracy's Dilemma" (Table of Contents). Anderson had put together a number of successful memes that kept me reading and persuaded me to buy the book. The memes were successful enough that they are now a part of this work and I am attempting to promote his ideas to even more readers. This is not the same passive experience as catching a cold. The value in understanding memetic theory is in realizing that ideas "have a life" and that life continues when the ideas spread successfully. Keeping ideas alive by actively spreading them is the consciousness that memetic theory is trying to reveal and invoke. Colleges do it every semester with required courses This, however, does not preclude the idea that memes spread without much thinking behind them either; memetics considers both. However, one would hope that people studying this idea would find its best usefulness in realizing that ideas need to be actively critiqued.

In essence, Anderson contends that the new issue of belief is not what to believe, but *what belief is*. Our modern society is rather different, psychologically speaking, than premodern societies in that "premodern societies did not generally entertain the idea of any possible gulf between objective reality and social belief systems, much less the idea that it might be possible for other societies to have much different but equally good worldviews or that multiple worldviews (and views *about* worldviews) might coexist in the same social space" (7). As a society today, human beings have a great degree of self and other awareness,

perhaps more than has ever existed in human history. The large self-help sections in bookstores and the proliferation of psychological therapists (in areas of marriage, work, and personal life) reflect the growing self-referential nature of human existence in modern times. This situation is both exciting and difficult, mainly difficult because there is so much new information and experience to process. As new cultural ideas impinge upon old ones and revolutionary/counterrevolutionary ideologies spread/react, people are left to find their balance in an alarming whirlwind of chaos and freedom. Because of the many variations developing in the arena of belief, people talking about education have begun to see the difficulty in finding a unified educational policy that will succinctly lay out the beliefs and values to teach in school systems from elementary to collegiate level (14). What kind of theory does a pedagogue need to be able to call upon when students that make up a class come from a wide range of differing beliefs about gender, religion, race, and status? What are some of the essential ideas education and educators need to embrace to teach in a diversified, yet unified world? The solution will, I think, come through theory and through instructors better versed in social theory/psychology, communication theory, and teaching theory, not just knowledge in their own field of study. Anderson nicely presents an image that shows the threads that can run into one context. "Consider, for example, the image of a young Palestinian soldier that a reporter I know saw standing guard in the hills of Lebanon. He wore sneakers, blue jeans, and a Grateful Dead T-shirt. He carried an Uzi" (20). The lines of demarcation are blurring quickly these days.

Anderson insightfully reveals the idea that the world is headed into a future that will desperately be in need of people capable of handling the incredible diversity-in-unity that is yet to come. As he puts it, "For the foreseeable future, the global culture is going to be one with a thin, fragile, and ever shifting web of common ideas and values, and, within that, incredible diversity -- more diversity than there has ever been" (25). The education system and the

mechanisms that make up its institutions could very well place pedagogy in the center of the storm. And it is a storm. Since society is a rather long way from Star Trek, teachers today and in the future will likely find themselves in a "warzone" that many educators describe as part of the current American debacle of lower and higher learning. To move beyond what Gerald Graff calls "the culture wars" a teacher must become a pedagogue engaged in thinking about his/her thinking regarding teaching. To further illustrate how culture, society, and belief have changed and metamorphosized into a diversified-but-unified entity, Anderson points out how hard it is to sustain a cultural revolution, "One reason it is so hard to tell when true cultural revolutions have occurred is that societies are terribly good at co-opting their opponents; something that starts out to destroy the prevailing social construction of reality ends up being a part of it" (49). The system finds a way to cope with what it feels to be a threat to its health.

Perhaps no single social revolution in my life proves this point better than rap music. Originally meant and intended to give voice to black urban anger and frustration, rap has now become one of the most successfully co-opted revolutions of my generation. What started out as a place for black youths to aggressively criticize American culture, especially white Americans views of race and government's racist policies in inner cities, has turned into a free for all for music companies to parley hot new rappers into money making pariahs. In a paradox only suited to our modern world, two of raps most successful artists, Tupac Shakur and Snoop Doggy Dogg, provided record companies with free advertising because of their well publicized legal problems functioned as examples of the authenticity of their experience, and thus their music. In many ways, their legal problems helped to define their music as "real." Rap music as a genre has been so successfully co-opted as to have varying degrees of "realness" and "falseness." Only after twenty years of development, NWA (Niggers With Attitude) and Naughty by Nature, who got their respective starts in the 1980's, would be

considered Rap's grandparents. Perhaps the last most outstanding cultural revolution in rap occurred with Ice-T's song, "Cop Killer," which did generate a storm of controversy. But even that did not slow down the eventual co-optation of rap into the mainstream. Snoop Doggy Dog's debut album opened at number 1 on the Billboard Charts in December, 1993.

Few co-optation processes are ever complete, but the co-optation of rap has been successful enough to "put a lid" on its most revolutionary elements. The system at large is not ready to face the serious critique imposed by rap music, but neither has it been able to wholeheartedly ignore that critique. In many ways, rap has provided a language for oppression to a group that was experiencing oppression, but having a hard time articulating that experience. Perhaps in the same way that the term date rape came to encapsulate and name acts that had been occurring and hurting women before a clearer language developed about this type of abuse, rap identified and more clearly named institutionalized racism for the group of people most abused by it, primarily young black men. Fortunately for the part of the system that resists rap's critique, those in that segment have been able to throw money at the problem as a stop gap measure against its revolutionary cries. Any revolutionary voice must be wary of the lure of reaching a wider audience through the mechanisms of the system. Once invested in the dynamics of the larger system it becomes harder to maintain the integrity of a revolutionary idea. It is like pretending your wedding is wholly yours to plan and decide when someone else's money is involved, usually your parents. Relying on their money is a de facto invitation for them to put in their opinions. Of course, if you have to rely on your own funds, you may find yourself in front of the justice of the peace at the county courthouse (maybe an "honest" wedding, but certainly not the most romantic).

As Anderson presses further into his argument he reminds the reader that "evolution and human history speak through each of us as we assemble each second's reality, and the

ghosts of millions of others are with us in our most private moments. The brain may be studied as part of an individual human being, but the mind is not, as Chilean neuroscientists Humberto Maturana and Francois Varela put it, simply something that is within the brain" (68). Much in the same way, a general theory of pedagogy can never completely enclose the potential of context or "reality." In fact, the Transforming Classroom approach often looks for the open areas and exploits them as part of the learning process. Each of these writers and thinkers offer a sound theory base in an attractive package, perfect for young and new students. Pedagogues can use Brodie's, Rushkoff's and Anderson's ideas about viruses, the datasphere, and belief to springboard beginning students into difficult teaching situations with the necessary mental tools to achieve high degrees of success teaching whatever material is at hand. What is being discovered is that the "whole movement [through life] is a search for ways that people can make sensible choice about such things [as belief and reality] in a world of multiple realities" (70). In education this search is acutely developed as part of the learning environment. Another of the modern shifts occurring and reoccurring is the "increasing recognition that the foundation of scientific truth is ultimately a social foundation, a human foundation" (77). Yet one more nail in the coffin to bury objectivist views of reality. Whether the organic network described by Brodie and Rushkoff or the constructivism described by Anderson, the thinking community in all areas of study is beginning and continuing to formulate the overarching meta idea that reality is something constructed from the "minds" of society, individuals interacting with others, and complex human systems like law, politics and education. This group also successfully resists throwing themselves into subjectivist turmoil by arguing that "intersubjective" or conditionally constructed realities have real forces and staying power. In other words, the education system consists of buildings erected throughout

every state, employing living beings and engaging in acts of ideological and knowledgeable development. In some places reality is "up for grabs," but in others it's "as solid as rock."

Anderson further contends that "as we become aware of the social construction of reality -- consciously, *publicly* aware -- the boundary erodes between the kind of fiction we call art or literature and the kind of fiction we call reality. History becomes another kind of storytelling, personal and social life becomes another kind of drama ..." (99). In such a paradigm the pedagogue can take on the role of someone who shows students how the "fictions" and dramas of real life get constructed, maintained, and challenged. Rhetorical theory that does not limit itself to language alone, but accounts for the real actions and contexts connected to language can provide the necessary insight for instructors and students to engage in the difficult task of editing their lives in the ways most useful to their particular contexts. Just such an editing process, both theoretical and practical, informs the idea of the Transforming Classroom that this work is moving towards. Inherent in pedagogy that is authentic and real is the understanding that education, like politics, "is a reality-creating process by which we decide who we are and what we think is happening" (Anderson 107). The paradigm shift into a conceptual understanding of reality as something constructed stands against older notions of the roles of people in society:

> Personal identity as we know it is a fairly recent social invention. Medieval Christians regarded the individual human's life on earth as only a pale reflection of the cosmic struggle of good and evil. Such noble modern notions as the uniqueness of individuals and his or her lifetime can scarcely be found anywhere in the record of medieval culture. Insofar as a person had an identity, it was inseparable from occupation, social class, and other designations that most people could neither choose nor change. (Anderson 113)

As a result, "the individual in search of self-identity becomes a consumer of reality" (114). If you are shopping for a reality, there is no better marketplace than the university.

Brodie, Anderson, and Rushkoff dress up difficult ideas in attractive formats and accessible language. The chapters of their books and their sub-sections reflect the authors' understanding that an intelligent, but general audience's attention is best attracted and sustained with rhetoric that mixes complex ideas with clever, at times humorous, language. Anderson has sub-sections in his book entitled "Bombthrowers and Mindblowers" (34), "The Deconstruction Derby" (87), and "Camp Culture: Being Somebody in Quotes" (144). Rushkoff and Brodie are equally entertaining with subsections like "Sticks and Stones" (Rushkoff 70), "Truth *and* Dare" (Rushkoff 141), "the *selfish* gene" (Brodie 69), and "*sex* buttons" (Brodie 119). The word entertaining is underlined for a reason. It is the combined idea of entertainment and intellectual ideas that these authors brought to my attention through their writing. These works reflect the kind of application Transforming Classroom theory would look for in a classroom context filled with general, intelligent audience members, the undergraduates filling up general college requirement courses. I wanted to begin with these writers because they successfully take on the challenge of trying to initiate curious, but uniformed thinkers into new, complex ideas. Because of the audience they are choosing to address, these writers understand that they have to be extremely creative to draw the reader in and sustain his/her attention. In many teaching contexts this is just as true, and pedagogues have to be equally *entertaining* and intelligent about their subject matter.

Entertainment in education?! Entertaining education?! To many instructors this probably sounds like an oxymoron. If the idea really has memetic staying power, for some people in the education field it could even spell the death knell for all that is good and noble about teaching. Standard dress for teachers in high school and college freshmen courses would become clown costumes. I see it now, Bozo the Clown teaching The Scarlet Letter. I assure you I am proposing nothing so extreme, but I am suggesting that teaching, like writing, has to

be very much aware of its audience. Young minds require different, creative teaching than do the older, focused minds. One of my favorite instructors at UNCG, Dr. Patricia Roberts, use to express the idea that different audiences required that a writer wear a different hat. The instructor that starts off his/her day in a freshman composition class does not wear the same hat to his/her graduate student seminar on composition theory. It would simply be inappropriate. Transforming Classroom theory is very much concerned with what's appropriate for which audience. An instructor could certainly choose to assign Terry Eagleton's Ideology: An Introduction to his/her undergraduate students, but s/he had better be prepared and willing to work sentence by sentence or paragraph by paragraph building up the knowledge students would need to read the material with any hope of understanding it. Eagleton's book is aimed at a highly sophisticated and extremely well read audience, at the minimum graduate students fairly well advanced in their studies and at the optimum professional academics interested in ideological theory. Brodie, Rushkoff, and Anderson all cover similar ground as Eagleton, but they have written with an uniformed audience in mind. Pedagogy works the same way.

If the idea of entertaining young students seems hard to swallow, consider it in the memetic terms that Brodie discusses. The instructors that find a way to get the attention of their students, by entertaining or being personable or assigning "catchy" texts, are the ones that are successfully spreading memes. They get remembered; they get replicated. Students recommend the instructor to their friends; they keep the books that were assigned rather than sell them back to the bookstore. "Anything at all that gets copied, no matter what the copying mechanism, and whether or not there is a conscious intention to copy, is a *replicator*" (Brodie 67). Teaching is very much about the business of intentional copying. A good idea "placed in" a bad copier will not get replicated nearly so successfully as a bad idea in a good copier.

What Transforming Classroom theory strives for is good ideas in good copiers and optimum replication.

Zen Minds In The Academy (Thinking About Teaching):

Gerald Graff, Paulo Friere, Ann Berthoff and Peter Elbow

Not all texts and writers are as concerned with getting the attention of a browser. Many texts have preexisting audiences that are already initiated into their area of study. These writers can worry less about packaging and more about content, but that does not mean that they can ignore packaging altogether. There is Zen thinking for a public, general audience and there is Zen thinking for more specialized audiences. What is shared among both is the meta skill for writing about difficult ideas in ways that show the relationship between theory and practice/application. The writers discussed in this next section are representative of "mindful appropriateness" with regard to pedagogical theory. These writers represent "threshold thinking" between the general audience writing of the first section and the even more focused writing that will be discussed in the last section. These writers are the ones that contributed to the idea of the Transforming Classroom in its formative stages. They provided me with the theoretical wherewithal to be able to recognize which writers and texts would be appropriate for teaching which ideas to students of a certain type in certain contexts. These writers are artists of ideas regarding teaching theory. They have holistic vision and they are writing to an audience that is also seeking holistic vision about pedagogy.

I spent some time discussing the design of the books by Rushkoff, Anderson, and Brodie because they were essential parts of the each writers persuasive attempts to capture the attention of their audience. Of the writers and texts to discuss in this section, only Gerald Graff's Beyond the Culture Wars: How Teaching the Conflicts Can Revitalize American Education, shows any hint of trying to sell itself on the outside. The front cover has shadowy

photograph of what could be a campus of one of America's oldest academic institutions. The spine is dark maroon with only Graff's name and the title of the book in pale yellow letters. The back has a brief description and a few supporting quotes. The "catchiest" thing on the outside is the first sentence of the description of the book, "Higher education *should* be a battleground of ideas: the real problem, Gerald Graff says, is that students are not getting more out of the battle." Ann Berthoff's The Making of Meaning is solid royal blue all the way around with white lettering for the title (which takes up most of the cover) and her name and green lettering for the subtitle: "metaphors, models, and maxims for writing teachers." The back cover has short descriptions of her other books. Peter Elbow's book, Embracing Contraries, is equally plain, also with a blue background and only text on the cover. Paulo Friere's book, Pedagogy of the Oppressed is slightly more eye catching because it has a white background with bright orange red text for the words "Pedagogy" and "Oppressed." The difference in book design functions, quite literally, as a metaphor for the difference between the audience of the first set of writers and this set.

Gerald Graff is the best writer to continue with, as far as unraveling the idea of the Transforming Classroom goes. His work also provides the perfect bridge from Brodie, Rushkoff, and Anderson to thinkers focused on teaching and teaching theory. Brodie, Rushkoff, and Anderson represent the most forthright element in the quest for transforming students into an appreciation of the life of the mind. Theirs are the books a pedagogue would probably want to actually take into the undergraduate classroom and read or assign. Graff, Berthoff, Elbow and Friere represent the type of pedagogical mind an instructor would want behind his/her practice. They are, after all, writing to the people engaged or to be engaged in the action of teaching. In a graduate course on pedagogical theory, their thinking and books would be the ones to read and assign because they provide the best understanding and

explanations of pedagogy and its difficult task in modern society. In that same course, Brodie, Rushkoff and Anderson would be the sample texts to use to show graduate students the kind of rhetorical devices that will best invite the most students into the transformations that come from participating in the college experience.

Anderson's idea that people have become consumers of reality brings into focus some difficult issues for the academy that Gerald Graff directly confronts in Beyond the Culture Wars, not the least of which is the buying and selling of information and ideas. Perhaps no single concept will raise the hackles on the back of "true-blooded" academics than to suggest that his/her ideas are merely products to be consumed, bought and sold in the free market economy of ideas. Yet, that is, in many respects, exactly what is going. Educational institutions, and universities in particular, have simply enjoyed a privileged position in the open market of competition. But these days, football and basketball programs generate far more real capital to a school than any single or probably any combined academic programs. Splits between private and public education value also unmask the relationship between money and education. The two cannot be separated, and professors and graduate students who would like to believe the two are not connected or should not matter are not keeping in step with the times. As I wrote earlier, the ideal teaching situation is the one described in the I Ching hexagram Meng, where the student seeks out the teacher. Instead, colleges actively recruit students to keep a steady flow of moneys pouring into the system. A good deal of the sales pitch has to do with the oftentimes vague and ambiguous relationship between making money at a job after college and having a college degree. That relationship certainly reaches fruition if a student intends to major in a highly specialized field (which usually means attaining a degree beyond a bachelor's), some area of study where an industry is worker poor, or become a part of the system as a professional in some academic field of study. Other than that, every

bachelor's degree in a liberal arts class becomes a weak form of a business degree. In very general terms, if people are not specialized, they will be in sales of one sort or another.

Gerald Graff's chapter "Life of the Mind Stuff" in Beyond the Culture Wars, like almost all the chapter headings in Anderson's, Rushkoff's, and Brodie's books, gives a wink at some of the pompous attitudes often found in higher education, especially with regard to the "public-at-large." Well, more and more of the "public-at-large" is attending the university and causing a real need for changes in teaching. The Transforming Classroom, along with thinking like Graff's, is a response to that need. In that chapter Graff points out that traditionalist and revisionist intellectuals do not appear all that different to students because the rhetoric of the two is equally confusing "stylistically" in the mind of the student:

> ... to the struggling student who has not been socialized into the discourse of literary criticism, the difference between the traditionalist and the revisionist will seem far less significant than it does to these antagonists themselves. To that student, the traditionalist and the revisionist will seem far more similar to each other than they seem to him, his parents, and his peers. However deep their ideological antagonism, to that student they will still be just a couple of professors speaking a language light-years from his own about problems he has a hard time regarding as problems (93).

Without induction into the language, rhetoric, or conversational style of literary theory, the student will never attend to the problem argued by the traditionalist and revisionist, even if the problem is one that the student would likely engage vigorously if s/he could follow the conversation. Successful pedagogy really requires instructors to be able to see the various "degrees of rhetoric" through which a meta idea can pass and find a text with a rhetoric that suits students in a particular context. Rushkoff's book, for example, might not be "intellectual enough"[8] for graduate students and Berthoff's book might be too daunting for introductory courses in writing filled with freshmen (on the front cover Berthoff identifies the book as a text

[8] I put these words in quotes because it is a common presumption of the academy to assign valuation to material based on the density of the writing or against popularity.

for teachers, not students). On the other hand, a good teacher could probably apply both texts successfully in either situation, but it is very possible that in certain contexts one text or the other would find easier appropriateness.

Graff is very adamant about the idea that education today requires all sorts of new cognitive strategies and thoughts about what it means to teach in this era of diversity and complexity. It also needs some very traditional ideas to be applied honestly -- open, but socially responsible conflict towards solutions. To become accomplished as both a pedagogical theorist and a teacher communicating ideas, instructors have to be incredibly perceptive about students -- how they come to the university, what they bring (not just what they lack), what they suspect they want from their education, and how their standpoint in life affects they way they learn. Graff's voice and his rhetoric is the most like my own. As with Graff's idea that teaching conflicts promotes intellectual growth, the Transforming Classroom theory aggressively seeks out any theories that will aid in the process of teaching and learning. Paulo Friere, Peter Elbow, and Ann Berthoff all contribute and contributed significantly to the "meta repository" from which the idea of the Transforming Classroom borrows when I apply it.

In Pedagogy of the Oppressed Friere not only talks about the philosophy and epistemology a teacher needs to develop in order to achieve great success instructing, but he also outlines many of the common failures and tactics that keep "authentic" learning from occurring. He also reminds those who have chosen this profession and life's work that they are leaders. What's even more insidious than the types of education and educators that intentionally oppress students are the institutions and instructors that do it unknowingly. As he points out, "Many political and educational plans have failed because their authors designed them according to their own views of reality, never once taking into account (except as mere

objects of their actions) the *men-in-a-situation* to whom their programs were ostensibly directed" (75). I have seen this point illustrated best in what I like to term "pseudo new idea education." Group work has, arguably, become one of the "liberal cure alls" to the problem of student interest and the lack thereof. It's become the penicillin of the classroom. While not all classrooms have embraced it, a number have most assuredly tried and failed and a number have tried and succeeded. What tends to be common among the failures I have either heard about, witnessed or been a part of is misapplication. I happen to think that group work *is* the cure to many of the problems found in university classrooms, when applied correctly. And so it has become an essential part of the Transforming Classroom activity.

For group work to be truly effective, the teacher must be willing to give up control of the classroom for periods of time and allow students to work in their own directions. The students also have to have some time to get to know one another before engaging in a group project; in other words, they have to be allowed to socialize on class time. The pseudo group work produces the same results that detached lecturing produces; students going through the motions of work without connection to the work or each other. Only now, there is a group of individuals detached from the work rather than each single one scribbling soon to be forgotten notes. Most of my pseudo group experiences occurred when I was an undergraduate at Chapel Hill. The one I remember best was one in which I was put together with three other people, whose names I never had to learn or really had time to learn. We were given a prompt, which assumed we all had the same degree of knowledge about the text. The beginning of the task immediately left one group member out of the project because he had not read the assignment. This little problem created a whole host of social issues about how we felt about him and his potential effect on our grade. All I could see from group work in this situation was that other people could bring down my grade rather than help it. When I ask my students about group

work, I have found similar experiences among them to be quite common. Misapplication breeds mistrust ... another failed liberal idea that gives traditionalists and conservatives fodder for a return to lecturing and canons. Friere's point in a nutshell.

What scares most educators about Friere's theory is the fact that students must be considered viable thinkers with judgments about their own learning that must be taken seriously. The student that says studying Shakespeare is a waste of his/her time should not be overruled or ignored because the instructor or the institution thinks they alone know what is best for the pupils. Pedagogues have to take that student opinion seriously, which at the deepest level may mean accepting the judgment of the student to be valid -- that the study of Shakespeare really is no longer a valid part of certain undergraduate contexts for certain students. Such a conclusion would probably result from the assumptions by students that course work in college should have some readily practical application in their lives. Such an assumption is especially true for students of community colleges and students working a job and attending school. If we are to assign a set number of hours to be completed through course work for an undergraduate degree, perhaps the university system will need to consider replacing some of the "old guard" curriculum with courses about racism, human relationships, and a host of topics more immediate and needed as a part of higher education for student populations more interested in seeing the translation of study in the classroom to application in the real world more directly.[9] What type of choices would instructors make then about texts

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[9]One of the ideas I will be discussing in detail in Chapter 4 will be degrees of difference. The difference between a course on racism and racial issues and one on Shakespeare's early plays is not that Shakespeare or any piece of literature does not connect to lives today. The difference comes from a number of factors that make a difference. Racism is part of the daily rhetoric of most people's lives so there is a preexisting connection that can be called upon in class discussion and construction. Also, if the institution of education is expected to be able to explain what its role in society is, then the university system must develop a curriculum around ideas currently evolving. If, as I see that role, it is to educate the member of the community so that they can better participate as member in a community, then we must ask ourselves what we should be teaching first that students need most. That may mean moving Shakespeare back to junior and senior level classes or into graduate school classes. Shakespeare is not

and curriculum in literature and writing courses that required not canonical knowledge of certain works, but canonical knowledge of certain understandings about the state of the world. Students might encounter more texts like Reality Isn't What It Used To Be. Student critique can become deeply meaningful when the student voice is part of the discourse in a real and authentic way. An approach to pedagogy that revolved around teaching understandings about the state of the world could easily include a course on Shakespeare, but probably in a revisionist way. English departments have the great evolutionary advantage of using the term literature to forage out into new territory. Shakespeare's reach has extended into music and film[10], two alternative "texts" that can be used to work a way into the original texts of the plays.

The terms "real" and "authentic" may seem a bit vague when used theoretically. I remember challenging Friere in my own mind by asking, "well when I'm teaching Shakespeare isn't something really occurring?" In a basic experiential way yes, but in a deeply meaningful way, not necessarily. Friere explains that "the more active an attitude men and women take in regard to the exploration of their thematics, the more they deepen their critical awareness of reality and, in spelling out those thematics, take possession of that reality" (87). When students fail to take possession of the reality that is Shakespeare because they cannot be persuaded or *taught* how to connect his work with their real, authentic lives (i.e., the ones they live everyday), then education is failing. It becomes a mindless distraction that is forgotten as soon as the final grade is given. I don't know how many notebooks from high school and undergraduate college I have stored away in some box that contain hours upon days upon

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really the target of my critique, just merely the example. As someone attempting revolutionary pedagogy, part of the revolution is to ask the question of what is needed most and what might have to be moved aside to make way for the new and more necessary curriculum.

[10] A group that had some popular success in the early 1990's was Shakespeare's Sister and the group Cause and Effect have a song on the their album Trip (1994) entitled "In Shakespeare's Garden." New Shakespeare films of the 1990's included Henry V, Hamlet, and Othello

months upon years of mindless exercises in taking notes and regurgitating information. Friere describes the process of learning by simple memorization and regurgitation as a Banking Method of education. The Bank (school) lends out information and asks students to store it for a period of time (a week, semester) before redepositing it back in the bank in its original form. There is no interest involved, just an accumulated (grade point average) record of redeposits to show that the bank is getting back what it put out. But nothing is *really* happening, except for the passage of time. This method of education is one reason the popular metaphor to describe high school has become "babysitter.".

What Friere suggests is a hard thing. As he points out:

> [revolutionary education] ... is for the people to come to feel like masters of their thinking by discussing the thinking and views of the world explicitly or implicitly manifest in their own suggestions and those of their comrades. Because this view of education starts with the conviction that it cannot present its own program but must search for this program dialogically with the people, it serves to introduce the pedagogy of the oppressed, in the elaboration of which the oppressed must participate (105).

Such a practice in an university classroom presents a number of immediate concerns. Foremost among them is the very real observation that the students may take teachers in directions they may not feel comfortable with. But if that is a concern, the deeper question is why should teachers feel that way? What about the institution that education has become would make them worry about going into a teaching situation with some open space for students to insert themselves *dialogically* into the design and discourse of a course that they would be teaching. It would certainly mean, on the practical level, that the syllabus would have to remain general and open to change. It would mean that they might have to persuade students to discuss a topic rather than demand that they discuss it. It would mean that instructors would need to think more theoretically about their thinking and the realities they construct in their classrooms.

As soon as instructors begin to consider a position such as Friere's as viable and sensible much of the construction of the classroom and the university institution get thrown into relief. For me the epiphany which followed lead me into a situation that Peter Elbow discusses in great detail in his book Embracing Contraries, the need for methodological belief. It also lead me to another meta idea that became part of the foundation for the Transforming Classroom. By considering what Friere has to say as valid and possible and then connecting it with Friere, a center begins to form that puts pedagogues in a framework where they will have to begin thinking about exactly what their role as a teacher is supposed to be above and beyond just transmitting information. Part of that role is in constructing and designing the course and the curriculum for the classroom; the other part is in determining how instructors intend to lead and/or guide students through the course -- what philosophies and theories would they use and how would they engage the students as part of a social situation (Friere/Graff). When I reflected back on my early teaching, I discovered that I was not very clear about my agendas for teaching and I needed to be. After reading Peter Elbow I found out that my position was actually rather common. "And it is true that college teachers are characteristically unclear about their goals. Many haven't even decided what *kind* of things their goals are; that is they haven't made it clear to themselves to what extent their goals consist of: effects upon student behavior, thinking or character; or effects upon their own behavior or knowledge; or effects upon published knowledge" (120). This issue has to become central to thinking about pedagogy because it is something always already present in every teaching situation and it is "the wave of the future." What the goals look like specifically for individual instructors will vary with situations and contexts, but if instructors engage in the act of teaching, then they are practicing (explicitly or implicitly) an agenda(s).

Peter Elbow sums up nicely a problem instructors often encounter when teaching undergraduate students in beginning composition and narrative courses. He points out that "if you are teaching beginning students in an area of your professional expertise, it is almost impossible really to join in; from the first moment of class, you know what the "answer" is or where you are trying to go" (213). But then again this situation for the instructor is the very thing that potentially can make them revolutionary (in Freire's sense) for students. This point will actually be demonstrated in chapter five when I show Transforming Classrooms "in action." What makes a teacher a good instructor is not simply his/her knowledge of the field, but whether s/he is capable of finding a way to join in with the students and using his/her knowledge to help them grow in their abilities to write, think, and interpret. Think back to the chess metaphor I used in chapter one to describe Vygotsky's concept of Zones of Proximal Development. When graduate students or professors teach beginning courses to beginning students they cannot teach them as if the students are as knowledgeable as themselves, but they must find ways that connect with the students' knowledge at student levels of development and bring them closer to the deeper, broader academic understanding of whatever it is that is being taught. There is nothing wrong with knowing better than the students in this framework; instructors are supposed to.

When instructors make the unnecessary leap to an "objective," evaluative framework that sees student learning as an "object of the reality" they have to promote agendas that construct a reality that is confining. In doing so those instructors lose the opportunities that ferment when an organic, dialectical interaction between the student and instructor knowledge are allowed to flow openly. Those teaching situations that rely on structure, not as a guideline that can and may need to be deviated from in the appropriate moment, but as a boundary that should never be crossed, usually end up restricting students from real learning opportunities.

the kind that flourish out of mistakes, chaos, and risk. I noticed myself committing this error when I would race through an essay or novel because I thought I had to "get it taught" by the end of the class or the end of the semester. The fact that some or even many students got left behind did not matter so long as I could defend myself in a "court of administration" that I had covered the material. My covering of the material is not so nearly as valuable as the student's uncovering it, usually because I already know it. It's the job of the instructor to make sure that the students make real contact with the material, and that can mean slowing down, taking detours and retracing steps. What is important to a theory of pedagogy is how we think about the value of what we teach and how we help students to see the value of it as well. Also, we must be sensitive to what the students value as a starting place for the connections we hope to make when teaching introductory and "elective required" courses. When I get to the discussion and case study of some of my transforming classrooms, I will be able to show specific examples of how this idea works in specific contexts.

To help instructors and students become more open to listening to other voices seriously Elbow proposes an idea which he calls methodological belief. He says of education, "It's the monopoly of the doubting game that has made it seem legitimate never genuinely to experience any point of view against which one can mount a strong attack. But precisely because the believing doesn't let us settle comfortably into the *one, easy,* or *seductive* belief it is liable to arouse a very different fear -- the fear of promiscuity. For the believing game asks us, as it were, to sleep with any idea that comes down the pike: ..." (283).

Elbow's idea of methodological belief is another meta idea that supports Transforming Classroom theory. A Transforming Classroom uses community discourse as part of the learning experience. There is, of course, a very real potential tucked into methodological belief, the potential to change a person's beliefs. The great exploration that is college comes

from meeting and exploring a vast array of ideas and beliefs. One reason I am generally very much against lecture as a format for teaching a class of any sort, but especially composition, narrative or critical thinking, is that it fails to take advantage of the best element of what a university provides: a grouping of people who would not normally engage each other in public conversation. The classroom is one of the few socially designed and accepted places for a group of diverse people to get together and engage one another on an immediate, face to face level about ideas and experiences. Lecturing without group work and open discussion wastes the potential that such an environment offers because the class members never have to engage one another.

Through trial and error I found one simple task to help get the methodological belief game rolling, demand that all the students know the names of all the other students in the class. The only test I ever assign in my courses is a name test and it is given within the first two weeks of class. We, as a class, spend the first part of the semester getting to know one another by name and usually by some peculiar facts. One of my favorite ways to help students learn and remember people is to have them fill out index cards anonymously at the beginning of the semester with two or three facts about themselves, which are then passed around the room randomly. We spend a couple of class periods trying to guess whose fact belongs to which student. To help the recognition and memory process I try to suggest that the students tell something about themselves that is safely embarrassing[11], unexpected or counter common, or distinctive and maybe even possible to guess by looking at the person. On one of the index cards a student from my Summer 1994 class had listed that they enjoyed playing war games. All of the guessing was directed to the male students, when in fact it was a female student who

[11]One young man from my Spring 1995 narrative class wrote that he streaked through the halls of his high school the last day of his senior year; Mike Grey was his name. I don't think any students had trouble remember his name after that day.

enjoyed playing, Stacey Hughes. It is far easier to give the "other's" beliefs a good hearing if some degree of the "otherness" is reduced simply by learning someone's name.

Perhaps the staunchest supporter of theory at all levels of the educational process is Ann Berthoff. She reminds those engaged in the pedagogical task of teaching that "theory must be accessible; it must be there when we need it, or we will find that our theoretical interest wanes and, with it, the intellectual energy needed for teaching composition [or any subject for that matter]" (Berthoff 5). The Making of Meaning is yet another text representative of a Zen mind in action. The action is the text, which like the works of the aforementioned authors and the ones that follow contains an understanding of the need for theory and practice to be readily applicable to variations in teaching contexts. But even more to the point, "Pedagogy always echoes epistemology; the way we teach reflects the conception we have of what knowledge is and does, the we think about thinking" (11). If pedagogues recognize, as Berthoff and the others do, that thinking is a dynamic, organic process, then pedagogical theory/practice should reflect that way of thinking. Berthoff also believes that teaching needs to occur in holistic approaches rather than bits and pieces carefully stacked one by one into the minds of students. As she points out about teaching composition, "we can teach the use of detail -- the conceptual, emblematic, intellectual, symbolic, substantiating role of detail only if we do so in the course of developing authentic occasions for writing" (27). Here again is a conceptual understanding that achieving authenticity in assignments leads to the double accomplishment of developing technique and meaning at one and the same time. Creating mindful or, "mind full," tasks eliminates (or better, just simply passes by) the false learning that often develops when form and content get separated because assignments fail to account for making contact with student's real lives and interest. This could be difficult to negotiate, but theory leads the way because it can "guide us in defining our purpose and thus in

evaluating our efforts, in realizing them" (32). As I have already suggested, theory is always already present in every teaching situation, the only thing that differs is an instructor's awareness of it. In pedagogy, awareness of theory is really an absolute necessity if an instructor hopes to teach optimally in the dynamic and living context of the classroom.

The wonderful thing about theory is that it "can help us figure out why something works so we can repeat it, inventing variations" (33). Berthoff was one those thinkers that showed me the importance of reflecting on successful and unsuccessful days of teaching to uncover the potential meta element(s) that could be reused to recreate success or failure. Just as I can count on class discussion increasing when students know each others names, I can count on discussion being far less when I don't require students to get to know each other. The two meta ideas that reducing otherness increases potential interaction and sustaining otherness contributes to a lack of interaction are ones that an instructor can actively apply as theory in practice. The epiphany regarding "otherness" and discourse developed because (at one time) I approached teaching my class from an incompletely thought out theory. I worked very hard in my first classes to incorporate material and ideas students suggested in an attempt to generate discussion. Often the class did not engage in the discussions I had hoped for because, as I later realized, they were hampered socially, not intellectually. My theory failed to account for all the details of the classroom context, which is a social *and* intellectual environment. Nothing will strike quite so profound a chord in the spirit as the discovery of someone who has completed a thought you yourself have been developing. Actual pedagogy, pedagogy in action, needs "a method that encourages critical questions about goals in conjunction with ways and means: a method that does not allow for the continual exploration of purposes and premises as well as procedures will soon become doctrinaire" (49). What I propose in the idea of the Transforming Classroom is a teaching approach always thinking and rethinking in

conjunction with the changing faces of students in the classroom, issues in society for the classroom, and the role of the classroom in society. Berthoff's work adds yet another central representational piece to the theory.

Other Zen Minds: Thinkers In, Around, and Near Pedagogy

In his book Actual Minds, Possible Worlds cognitive psychologist Jerome Bruner explores the idea that certain parts of reality are ours to construct -- actual minds create possible worlds that become actual worlds for possible minds. After reading his work I was struck by both a problem and potential solution to the problem of and in the construction of education as a type of reality. If thinkers accept Bruner's thesis that subjects construct much of reality as we understand it, then they must also accept the accountability and responsibility connected to such an idea. This concept is hardly revolutionary, basically it describes the entire law system and the formation of government. But oddly enough much of law, science, and education becomes reified over time giving the impression that things which were and are socially constructed are somehow natural. Fifty or one hundred years ago the literary canon and lecturing to students would never have been challenged as a form of social control or bad teaching method.[12] But as with all human systems along the road of historical development, choices were made and possible worlds became actual realities in university institutions through active engagement in certain pedagogical agendas, and probably the path of least resistance. As actual realities establish themselves and become entrenched in "tradition," they can begin to take on the "that's the way it has always been" aspect that somehow suggests that the methods and forms are "natural" and appropriate. Perhaps they were at one time, or

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[12]This claim does not mean that a unified, identical canon ever existed across the university curriculum, especially in literary studies or that alternative teaching styles were not emerging or in place. What I refer to is general notion of the way university education was done ... there were (and in some places still are) necessary books and lecture was the standard format for passing students through the canonical gates.

perhaps in a Zen sense every form/agenda has its right context. But every time I walk down the hall of one university building or another while classes are in session and I see students sleeping and teachers droning I have to wonder if the lecture system has worn out its usefulness and appropriateness. Of one thing I am quite sure, the lecture format and a canon of books that claim to be eternal and culturally independent of situations do not work in all contexts. I strongly doubt this narrow vision actually works in any reality. And as our society expands and classrooms continue to be places more and more of difference rather than similarity, these two approaches will continue to produce diminishing returns in terms of university goals and agendas that want to insure that students leave the university capable of articulating the value of their learning experience.

Writers central to, and especially helpful in, thinking and talking about pedagogy are ones that recognize the need for appropriateness in individual situations. Their ideas are flexible and adaptable. Jerome Bruner identifies one of the difficult aspects of pedagogy when he states, "What we lack is a reasoned theory of how the negotiation of meaning as socially arrived at is to be interpreted as a pedagogical axiom ..." (124-125). The obvious point in this statement is that the classroom and the university are social situations. And if meaning comes out of and is determined by social situations, then educators must be able to recognize and talk about the type of social situation they are participating in and to make distinctions between various contexts. The social situation and context of Duke is different from UNCG is different from community colleges is different from high schools. To work the most effectively as an instructor in any context, pedagogues have to be able to have a theory that adapts to contexts-in-general as well as specifically constrained practice in particular contexts.

Bruner points out that, "The moment one abandons the idea that 'the world' is there once for all and immutably, and substitutes for it the idea that what we take as the world is

itself no more or less than a stipulation couched in a symbol system, then the shape of the discipline alters radically. And we are, at last, in a position to deal with the myriad forms that reality can take -- including the realities created by story, as well as those created by science" (105). When instructors and pedagogues perform this thinking exercise, they become immediately implicated in the process of education at the most accountable level. What thinkers in this framework have come to understand is the tremendous responsibility and power in the action and experience of teaching. It becomes impossible, or at least very difficult, to have hidden agendas in the classroom as well as remain distant from student concerns and interests when one understands how pedagogues help students negotiate and create reality. In a context where teaching and instruction are recognized as something "couched in a symbol system," which can be "shaped" by the instructors, the question becomes what type of shape should this and that and this classroom take that will best optimize the learning instructors hope will take place within the students. In turn, this implicates instructors in all sorts of questions about agendas, social responsibility, and communication.

Someone who has written more explicitly about the classroom as community and the type of learning that comes through "authentic" interaction is Karen LeFevre. In her book Invention as a Social Act, LeFevre argues the same point about the nature and value of a situation in which diverse individuals are brought into a common environment. It is the job of the instructor -- radical pedagogues -- to find a way to maximize the potential that diversity offers us. To mesh a group of diverse people into a creative community requires considerable skill and practice. As Friere pointed out, there is a lot of pseudo teaching going on in the world these days because teaching ideas are not applied with any sense of authentic learning behind them. LeFevre makes the same point when she says, "reconceiving invention as a social act does not mean simply that we assemble a group of atomistic individuals -- add

people and stir -- who later resume their private search for knowledge. On the other hand, a scholar whose focus of study is a single writer need not necessarily hold a Platonic view of invention; the study might regard that individual as a participant in a dialectical interchange with other people and with socioculture" (49). Here is where methodological belief is valuable for helping members of a class achieve an organic state. What is essentially different about an organic (and transforming) community is that its members are linked in meaningful ways; they see their connections with other members of the community. This way they cannot remain disconnected from ideas presented to them by other members of the class. This attitude is far different from the "everybody has a right to say what they want and nobody has a right to be offended" free speech ideology that is pervasive in much of the common rhetoric about diversity seen in mass public communication.

LeFevre's work deals primarily with collaborative invention and writing and how to put collaborative thinking into practice through group work. Doing such work can be immensely valuable to learning about how people interact with others and how much of an individual's thought process is actually connected to other subjects. Philosophically, LeFevre reflects deeply a Zen type of mind because she recognizes that there is an element of the atomistic in the individuals that come together in group work as well as their collaborative mind. What she uncovers is the single/plural paradox of the human situation. By gathering a group of individuals together you have to understand that they each bring a particular and shared view of the world to the group and the assignment. When instructors and students see invention as a social act, they begin to see how individuals are both unique and plural at one in the same time. One can also learn a lot about some of the inherent problems of our peculiar western culture and its "commodified" mind. As LeFevre notes, students often resist group work because they want to possess and remain in possession of all the work. It is a deeply

embedded myth of the American soul to be independent and responsible to ourselves alone. This belief creates an "individualistic view of rhetorical invention" that "goes hand in hand with conventional ways of acknowledging inventors of material objects, ideas and texts. We tend to assume that a book with one author listed on the cover has one and the same inventor. But there may have been more than one person pushing the pen, and there were almost certainly others behind the byline: those whose work the author built on or adapted; those whose criticism prompted further invention; and those who created an environment in which that writer could invent" (30).

The central problem with focusing on the final product of student work, whether the end result is an exam or seminar paper, is that it fails to account for and assess the many developmental processes that go into producing the work. It is these very developmental processes that are most important in teaching students to become capable of adapting to and excelling in academic and "outside" social worlds. As LeFevre says, "Of course, once we stop insisting that the only item of consequence in this issue is whether one possesses -- yes or no? -- that golden nugget, we find there are other questions worth asking. Nochlin poses several: From what social classes or castes have artists come in different historical periods? How many good artists have had parents and close relatives who were artists? Did women have access to other painters as role models? Did women receive training? Did the expectations placed upon women in regard to their work (as mother, hostess, wife) make it unlikely that they would have the time or energy or concentration necessary to become great artists? <pp. 491-93/Nochlin> (LeFevre 84). When students begin to see questions that have historical relevance or that reveal the interconnectedness among the many forces that go into creating an artist or writer or scientist; they can begin to better see how realities for people are constructed. They can then begin to participate and insert themselves into the dynamic matrix of reality construction in

ways that will make them feel more capable, in control, and insightful about what is both positive and negative, what should be defended, supported and/or challenged. Having students work creatively in small groups in the classroom can help simulate opportunities for them to develop the ability to interact with diverse individuals. They can learn how to make connections with each other and the work of the course.

Echoing similar thoughts to LeFevre is reading/interpretation theorist Wolfgang Iser. In his work The Act of Reading Iser talks extensively about the creative act of reading and how an understanding of process helps readers to negotiate a text. Life seems to be ever the search for meaning. This pursuit is usually never more engaged than when reading and interpreting a text, whether for pleasure or for specific assigned academic reasons (sometimes they even coincide). Iser points out that, "As meaning arises out of the process of actualization, the interpreter should perhaps pay more attention to the process than to the product" (18). What gets dissolved in this theory of reading is the idea that a single meaning exists in the text and it is the job of the reader to find it. "Now the traditional form of interpretation, based on the search for a single meaning, set out to *instruct* the reader; consequently tended to ignore both the character of the text as a happening and the experience of the reader that is activated by this happening" (Iser 22). The key word here is "happening;" it captures the active organic act that is reading as well as revealing its multiple nature. In a classroom many "happenings" occur. If you have 20 or 30 or 40 or 300 students, you potentially have the same number of happenings between instructor and each student and each student with each other student and each student with the text. Trying to find one meaning or teaching technique in such a complexity is certainly breeding ground for cliché.

Iser reveals that complexity is both the problem and the solution to understanding the act of reading. His theories also apply equally well to understanding the act of pedagogy

because the two share so many of the same elements: text with intention (the instructor), negotiation between text and reader (student as audience), and the unique and common ways in which said interactions are processed by the reader/student. When he says, "The history of interpretation shows clearly that such an approach [the single meaning theory] had to be based on external frames of reference, which as often as not were those of a sophisticated subjectivity; thus the insight and the 'success' of such interpretations sprang from those very factors that they were claiming to eliminate," he steps into the meta theoretical realm (23). Effectively, he strips the magician, whether it is the power structure of the university, classroom, or one to one relationship of instructor and student down to his/her birthday suit. In essence, all of these writers uncover the sophisticated subjectivity that is meta theory, which then leads to a discourse about sophisticated intersubjectivity. Jerome Bruner's and Paulo Friere's meta ideas connect nicely with Iser's. In meta theoretical terms, the instructor who thinks some objective canon or reality or way to teach exists and the instructor who thinks of these things as organic "happenings" actually occupy the same theoretical "space;" it's just that the first one is oblivious, ignoring, or consciously repressing the knowledge that s/he is the most active part of the construction of the classroom. In a way theory is like breathing oxygen, everyone's breathing it, but not everyone is thinking about their breathing process. Of course, the limit of this metaphor is the fact that instructors don't often really need to think about their breathing unless they have trouble catching their breath, but power can often provide a giddy rush of oxygen. Theory, on the other hand, especially in the complex environment of the classroom and education system really requires of its users (remember every instructor is a user) to think about how it is being applied in context to make sure that it is being applied appropriately. Or as Iser puts it, "All utterances have their place in a situation, arising from it and conditioned by it" (62).

Another thoughtful idea that Iser provides about reading theory that can be considered for teaching theory is the understanding that, "the new moment [in reading or learning] is not isolated, but stands out against the old, and so the past will remain as a background to the present, exerting influence on it and, at the same time, itself being modified by the present. This two-way influence is a basic structure in the time-flow of the reading process, for this is what brings about the reader's [student's] position within the text [classroom]" (114). When I first read this passage, I was reminded of Vygotsky's zones of proximal development, another piece connecting. Students learn, in fact all of us learn, in hesitating steps of personal historical development. But what is unique about Iser's idea is the awareness that the present actually shapes past events and redefines them. Much of what the academy does when real learning occurs is give students a way to look with more depth into their potential future lives, but they practice such thinking on their past lives.

In one of my first critical thinking classes I remember teaching a young man from one of the more rural areas of North Carolina who was having to make some considerable adjustments to college life, not the least of which was living with a black roommate the semester he took my class. One aspect of my course dealt with the critical idea that many of a person's stereotypical positions come from a lack of experience with other, different types of people. Prejudices usually sustain themselves on ignorance. The great thing about young people in general is that often they retain elements of curiosity and openness even when they come from environments that support and promote limited thinking. Such was the case with my student.

In a conference about one of his papers, he admitted that it was harder and harder for him to return home and feel connected to his family. His experience with his roommate was conflicting with the opinions forwarded by his father about blacks. He was beginning to see

the racism in his family and hometown and he was having to struggle through some uncomfortable transformations. Comments that his father once made about black men and women that had been just a part of the household conversation had become racist remarks that he was beginning to disagree with. Not only that, but he was looking back into his past with his presently more open minded eyes and reshaping parts of it. His past was literally taking on a different meaning. Iser's and Vygotsky's ideas in action. That very "real" moment with my student helped me realize what a remarkable theory Vygotsky had devised. The student was moving out of a zone of development essentially defined by his experience at home and into one that included his experiences at home and in college. The college experiences offered him alternative perspectives, which, when layered onto his prior knowledge, required him to expand his zone of understanding about the issue of racism

In his book Understanding Reading Smith, like Iser, writes about reading as a negotiation and active experience. And like the other theorists mentioned so far, the meta theory behind his theories and practices shares much in common with them. What should begin to emerge in this chapter is a degree of repetition with variation, different rhetorics for the same meta-theory. Smith's key contribution to a radical theory of pedagogy, one that can cope with the many complications facing instructors in university classrooms, is the understanding that error and the freedom to make these errors without punishment is a necessary component to learning development.[13] Much of the distaste for reading that is a part of many students' attitudes toward literature probably stems from experiences in reading where they were not allowed to fail comfortably. Smith contends,

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[13] Another thinker who writes extensively on error and its value in learning is Mina Shaughnessy. Her book Errors and Expectations covers much of the same material as Smith, and exactly the same theory I mention her because she illustrates the idea that theory has many advocates who overlap. In fact this section on Smith could easily be rewritten with Shaughnessy as the particular puzzle piece fit into this text.

> Readers cannot afford to set a criterion level that is too high before making decisions. A reader who demands too much visual information will often be unable to get it fast enough to read for sense. Readiness to take chances is critical for beginning readers who may be forced to pay too high a price for making "errors." The child who stays silent (who "misses") rather than risk a "false alarm" may please the teacher but develop a habit of setting criterion too high for efficient reading. Poor readers often are afraid to take a chance; they may be so concerned about not getting it wrong that they miss meaning altogether. (60)

Many classroom environments do not allow for unpunished error, which means they do not allow for *growth.* As well, many instructors teach and assign texts that go so far beyond student ability to adjust and adapt to the material as to effectively shut the students out of the learning process. Herein, though, lies the basic definition of the pedagogue -- someone who presents materials, ideas, and texts to students that are beyond their prior experience and knowledge and who concurrently helps the students move into a state whereby they can incorporate said materials into their relevant lives. As Smith points out about learning to read, "Whenever readers cannot make sense of what they are expected to read -- because the material bears no relevance to any prior knowledge they might have -- then reading will become more difficult and learning to read impossible" (81). The same is true when it comes to general leaning about any subject matter that is foreign or more complex than students have hitherto encountered. All of the students I teach are immersed in narrative and critical thinking everyday of their lives, but the classroom is a unique environment for talking about those ideas in explicit and complex ways.

Of course, the underlying assumption, not explicitly stated in almost all the theories mentioned so far is the belief that students want to read and learn. Smith reminds us that without interest, the greatest of teaching theories and techniques will be of little or no avail. "Whether or not we take something for granted, whether we will challenge other people's assertions or question our own opinions in the light of new evidence, depends on individual

propensities to behave in those ways, not on the acquisition of abilities that can be developed through instruction or even practice" (21). I do not agree with the reified notion that open-mindedness is somehow a genetic trait. And actually, I don't really think Smith intends for his statement to suggest genetic propensities to interest in learning, but that interpretation did come up in my mind. I do think that students are less inclined to "behave in that way" when classrooms do not allow for error or hesitant forays into new and uncomfortable ideas.

While it is true, perhaps, that no teaching technique or practice will probably make me enjoy reading biochemical manuals over Kate Chopin's The Awakening or the latest issue of the X-Men comic book, a context which helps me understand ways of reading them might make me less intimidated by them. I do believe that I have "individual propensities to behave in [certain] ways" because of my socio-historical development and I think it would do well to explicitly expand on this point of Smith's in this way. Even more in the sense of what I am trying to suggest about a theory of pedagogy is the idea that a meta theory recognizes and attempts to devise theory and practice that will allow as many members of class as possible to participate in the experience of learning in the class. At the introductory level of course work this idea is essential, often because the students do not have predetermined propensities in any direction. However, the student who chooses to withhold his/her interest will be hard (maybe even impossible) to reach by even the most skillful of instructors. And yet, the mindfulness of teaching must ever be directed to the students who still retain even the smallest amount of openness to learning no matter what subject is being taught. Therein lies the heart and soul and value of theory. My guess is that the majority of students and readers want to learn and they want the pedagogues to show them how. Instructors cannot rest on their laurels teaching only the students that seem already on their way to making the transition towards more difficult and challenging material; those students could probably do that on their own anyway.

Moving Towards More Meta Theory:

Wrapping Things Up and Preparing the Way for Lev Vygotsky

To fully understand the meta-concept and the Zen mind I am proposing, it helps to think of reality as something constructed, an idea that explains why the current cultural context for education is the perfect environment for Transforming Classroom theory. The great adventure in liberal arts studies comes from the growing awareness that connections can be made from one end of the university curriculum to the other. Zen minds in administration and among instructors realize that building bridges among varying fields of study creates an organic learning experience in which students can begin to put together a holistic understanding of their college journey. Fortunately there are a number of writers and thinkers engaged in a similar process connecting the complexity of ideas and fields of knowledge in our developing global society. More and more books are emerging that are tackling the difficult task of dealing with diversity and complexity. Writers like Graff, Anderson, Brodie, and Rushkoff have the uncanny intellectual dexterity to write about complexity using rhetoric that is highly accessible. Their "style" could be described as almost conversational or "down to earth," but the explanation of the ideas they deal with in no way reduces those ideas to inappropriate sound bites or oversimplified notions. They trust that language does not have to be densely jargonistic to communicate difficult concepts or challenging ideas, and in doing so their style also belies their understanding of content. Both Rushkoff and Anderson are popular culture theorists, so not only is their language "down to earth," but so is the material they deal with. In presenting the difficult ideas of belief, chaos, and multi-culturalism these authors rely heavily on current affairs and knowledge, much of which has no historical precedence, like the internet, new forms of music (rap, industrial, aggressive, alternative), world wide telecommunications, and so on.

The organic mind of the general populace which is emerging because of changes in the world that have really only begun in the last fifty years is creating the need for an organic pedagogy and organic conversation. Graff in particular has put into the literary discourse a work that demonstrates the type of thinking that will be needed in education as the world ever more quickly merges into a community of people no longer safely divided and closed off by geographical borders. The supporting quote on the front of Graff's Beyond the Culture Wars: How Teaching the Conflicts Can Revitalize American Education recognizes the rhetorical strategy he employs throughout the text, which "offers a highly readable and down-to-earth perspective of some of the most ballyhooed issues in higher education today ... By encouraging us to argue together, he may yet help us to reason together. -- Henry Louis Gates, Jr." (Front Cover). The profound observation that Gates makes on the front cover under scores both what Graff is attempting to do and what I am attempting to add to the discourse as well -- the need for discussion in education to be more reflective of authentic and real concerns among students, the "public" perception of education, and education philosophy. The move towards authenticity and away from narrowness, jargon, elitism and confusion in education includes the belief that the language about and around the discourse of education can be both accessible and complex at one and the same time. The most challenging places to encounter this situation are the introductory courses of the universities. Graff, like Elbow, writes using first person pronouns and personal examples to create a rhetoric that invites readers to engage his text as a work written by someone who is attempting to persuade and construct ideas openly rather than as a writer who has somehow tapped into objective truth.

In the second chapter of his book "The Vanishing Classics and Other Myths" Graff recounts his experience teaching Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness using critic Chinua Achebe's essay "An image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*." As Graff

forthrightly admits, "it never occurred to me how a black person might read the story, and the fact that only a small number of black students appeared in my classes helped assure that the question did not come up"(26). This sentence alone expresses a number of ideas that often get buried when instructors do not see agendas and interpretations as things governed by context. In his discussion of how Achebe's work affected his teaching of Conrad, Graff reveals how he came to understand the context bound nature of his instruction of the book. Also, he began to realize that he had all sorts of agendas and interpretations of the work that he promoted. And on top of that his students could have all sorts of interpretations based on very real differences in their personhood -- race, class, and gender. Achebe's essay reinforced a central idea of Graff's:

> ... that literary representations are not simply neutral aesthetic descriptions but interventions that act upon the world they describe. This, in fact, is the point underlying many recent critiques of the idea of *objectivity*, critiques that are poorly understood by their critics; the point is not that there is no truth but that descriptions influence the situations they describe, thereby complicating the problem of truth.
>
> In short, I was forced to rethink not just my interpretation of *Heart of Darkness* but my theoretical assumptions about literature. First I was forced to recognize that I *had* theoretical assumptions. I had previously thought I was simply teaching the truth about *Heart of Darkness*, 'the text itself.' (29)

Here again Graff unpacks several ideas critical to a radical pedagogy and classrooms aimed at transformation. First, he echoes Iser's idea of a sophisticated subjectivity, the kind that often gets billed as teaching the "text itself." Second, he recognizes that literature is not a detached observation, but an "act upon the world." Authentic discussion occurs in the matrix where literature is understood as an act upon the student's world *added to* the way in which students may interpret the text based on their situations in the world -- their race, class, gender, education, experience, age, etc. Third, he unpacks one of the most crucial ideas about teaching; it is a negotiation of truth, not a representation of it. For Graff, teaching the conflicts

is negotiating for the truth and the act of learning is in learning the ways to negotiate. Finally, he reaches in and unpacks a meta idea -- theoretical assumptions undergird all acts of teaching. The negotiation of truth in pedagogy for Graff thus becomes a discourse promoting certain theoretical assumptions that will encourage community discourse while acknowledging diversity and complexity.

Graff is also very insightful in pointing out that new critiques continue to emerge that severely challenge notions of objectivity. Anderson's work can easily be seen as a representative text that does just that. Because of his experience with Achebe and Conrad, Graff admitted to changing his approach to teaching the text so that the class would be open to variations of interpretations, "In short, I now teach *Heart of Darkness* as part of a critical debate about how to read it, which in turn is part of a larger theoretical debate about how politics and power affect the we read literature" (31). Basically, Graff shifted the class to a more theory based application where the novel became a tool for theory rather than a mere object of analysis. By shifting the text out of the center of the class and "critical debate" into the center, Graff actually found more "uses" for the text, better interpretations, and more opportunities to negotiate truth. This example with Conrad sets the stage for each of the successive chapters where Graff continues to show deft insight into meta situations in the classroom. In chapter four, "Hidden Meaning, or, Disliking Books," it is the unpacking of the social nature of teaching, "In short, reading books with comprehension, making arguments, writing papers, and making comments in class discussion are *social* activities" (77). In chapter five, "Life of the Mind Stuff," it is the unpacking of education's philosophical/pragmatic role in society, "The left/right polarization of the culture war has obscured this other important polarity, the one between intellectuals and non-intellectuals, or between those who have been socialized into the intellectual community and those who have not and are not sure they want to

be" (92). Graff successfully moves his discussion of teaching conflicts *below* the surface issues into deeper theoretical arenas.

If Graff is right in setting the negotiation of truth about pedagogy in ideological areas like social interaction, critical debate, agendas of instructors, philosophy of education (and its practical application in the modern world of modern cultures), then pedagogical theory must be highly adaptive and theoretical to be of any real and authentic use to the men and women who will one day instruct students. In fact, pedagogical theorists would do well to make contact with writers who have successfully integrated complex ideas and complexity into rhetoric and writing that is accessible like Graff, Elbow, Berthoff, and Friere. In many ways, the writers represented in this chapter give tremendous hope to develop the university into as a place capable of playing an even more pivotal role in the future of society than it has in its misleadingly reminisced past. Acclimating students to the brave new world community through history, anthropology, sociology, English, psychology, art, biology, chemistry and math courses geared to authentic learning that has practical application in student lives is a noble and worthy philosophy for pedagogues and pedagogical institutions to uphold. It would probably even sell, which, seriously enough, is becoming even more of a part of a university's function in the overall economic system of American culture. At the microcosmic level of individual instructors, the thinkers discussed in this chapter provide the necessary theoretical ideas to help them become authentic instructors actively engaging students. In more grand terms, these thinkers offer an explanatory model for pedagogical theory of a systemic nature that is highly sensitive and capable of responding to the consumer aspect of learning and teaching.

Get Connected

Perhaps one of the most powerful aspects of academic study is developing the ability to "see" connections from one idea to the next, to be able to construct a puzzle of connections

from pieces both within a field of study and outside of it. The next powerful aspect in academic study is turning those connections into some type of philosophical approach, in this case a pedagogical theory, that can contribute to furthering the conversation of minds about a subject. Good theory is everywhere. In fact, there are so many good theorists out there, a writer can only really hope to produce a representational model using a select few. And that, I think, is the most exciting thing about writing and thinking about teaching today and in the future. Gerald Graff, Ann Berthoff, Wolfgang Iser, Walter Truett Anderson, Peter Elbow, Jerome Bruner, and Paulo Freire weave together into a meta repository of theory for pedagogues and pedagogy that is open and adaptable to a context defined world and classroom. Each of these writers have played a central role in the development of the idea of the Transforming Classroom and its application. The best value of each of these theorists is the practical use of their theories.

In the next chapter I plan to explore the large meta "environment" that underwrites each of these thinkers: that reality is constructed. Of the many common connections that can be made among these writers, the one that runs concurrent with each is the notion that reality, perceived or actual, is constructed out of the action and interactions of human beings relating to one another and the environment around them. This idea has powerful repercussions for people engaged in the act of teaching. If reality is something constructed, and not merely apprehended, then the people who operate in contexts like teaching or politics take on serious responsibility for how that construction should occur. In teaching, this relationship is particularly unique because instructors should be helping students through the double task of thinking and thinking about their thinking, "minding the mind," and "being conscious of consciousness" (Berthoff 44). To put oneself in such a self-reflexive cognitive paradigm,

reality must be understood as something actively and interactively experience in both, and at one and the same time, a creative and reactionary way.

CHAPTER 3

Constructing Constructed Realities: Pedagogy As Negotiation

The author creates, in short, an image of himself and another image of his reader; he makes his reader, as he makes his second self, and the most successful reading is one in which the created selves, author and reader, can find complete agreement. (Iser 37)

Knowing others is wisdom
Knowing the self is enlightenment
Mastering others requires force;
Mastering the self needs strength.

He who knows he has enough is rich.
Perseverance is a sign of willpower.
He who stays where he is endures.
To die but not to perish is to be eternally present.

(#33 Lao Tzu 35)

Realizing the limits of our personal standpoint encourages us to learn from people whose standpoints differ from our own. We do this by respecting the difference of their lives and by recognizing that only they can define the meanings of their experiences, feelings, hopes, problems, and needs. We cannot speak for them, cannot appropriate their voices as our own. But to listen is to learn, and to learn is to broaden our appreciation of the range of human experiences and possibilities. (Wood 3)

Teaching as a Pedagogical Axiom

At the heart of the idea of teaching as a pedagogical axiom is what Jerome Bruner identifies as the human ability of actual minds to create possible worlds that develop into actual realities. Reality is the center of an organic living puzzle without edges that develops through language and action. One aspect of reality is the complex constructing matrices of the education system and the "realities" that intersect in the specific reality(ies) of the

constructing realities and preexisting constructed realities on many and various levels affected by many and various elements. This chapter will look at the meta ideas that inform the thinking of the theorists from the previous chapter that are necessary for building a foundation for the pedagogical theories that lead to the practice of the Transforming Classroom. In order to foster thinking about one's thinking to become a pedagogue, a view or explanation of reality must be put forth that constantly remains open and active, much like life itself. The Taoist Lau Tzu explored such a view of reality in the Tao Te Ching, a collection of eighty-one "chapters" translated into poetry. Perhaps the best known line in all of the work is "the Tao that can be told is not the eternal Tao." Tao means "the way." There is the meta "way," the eternal Tao, and there are infinite "ways," Tao(s) in the world. The foundation, the meta base, must be fluid and stable at one and the same time. The Transforming Classroom should first be viewed as a practical model designed to be context responsive. Its particular manifestations come out of the adaptive theoretical ideas that go into the theory/practice of the Transforming Classroom. In practice, the Transforming Classroom will take on the attributes of its instructor's personality, the goals of the course, the boundaries of the material, the community of the students (their personalities and goals), the mission of the university, and any other aspect of the context that plays a vital role in the experience of the class-in-context for the most students to the deepest level.

The language/action/theory required to sustain a "meta discussion" is very difficult to maintain for any length of time because, ultimately, theory must become invested in a particular experience. Abstract notions are always already present in concrete experience, but not always in the same and recognizable ways. Hence the value of theory is to show and underscore the connections that seemingly odd or extremely different experiences can oftentimes have. There always remains a peculiar or specific variation-in-application that

comes through the particulars of context. Theory should be, at one and the same time, concerned with important and significant differences *and* similarities. Or, as Ann Berthoff puts it, "Theory can help us figure out why something works, so we can repeat it, inventing variations" (33). For instruction, like any activity, there comes a point when practice is applied, when something is taught either as a demonstration of the theory or as an example of it. Chapter five will look at specific ways that I applied theories in order to create Transforming Classrooms in my courses. All of the theories I use rely on a meta theory that reality is constructed. Behind even the most complex of theories is the "space" out of which theory develops. The primordial soup of a reality is probability; reality cannot be closed because it is probable. Even the most entrenched and apparently objective concepts have a hint of probability in them which allows a sharp thinker to "get behind" all theories and applications. Sometimes "getting behind" an apparently objective concept can occur when something goes wrong that forces people to attend to the constructed nature of something, like all the lights at an intersection turning red at the same time. The theory that informs an introductory course in narrative or biology or chemistry or swimming becomes a particular reality through the agendas (a syllabus, course goals, university expectations) of the instructors, the desire of the students, the texts and material of the course, the practice of it all in context. And while successful melding of practice and context and the infinite actualities of each particular one might yield the useful transmission of ideas from the instructor who achieved them to instructors who might read about or experience them first hand, they often cannot hope to connect with the infinite contexts in which those particular practices do NOT fit.

And so, the question then becomes what the meta position is of all teachers and what one needs to learn in theory to be a good pedagogue in practice. If a real context, a reality, is

something that comes into being or exists as a result of constructions -- historical development, response to demands of a certain sorts (economic, cultural, political), and part of the social fabric -- then how can instructors learn to respond to realities they may enter through a new job and the realities they can create through their teaching approach? In a way, pedagogues are axiomatic organisms, at one and the same time continuing a constructed tradition while constructing the class, teaching students how to become a part of a constructed reality, and potentially constructing new realities from the old ones. In truth, anyone affecting some aspect of reality by determining, influencing, or encouraging a particular view of reality is axiomatic: politicians making laws, mothers/fathers telling their children what's right and wrong, advertisers, etc. Teaching just happens to be one of those axiomatic "conceptual places" in which the opportunity to think about being axiomatic has the best chance to be foregrounded.

The Transforming Classroom develops at two conceptual levels at one and the same time: teaching material and talking about the teaching of the material. Students are invited to begin to think about their learning as an active endeavor rather than as a passive one. Teaching can be the ultimate organic space, moving its members ahead while showing them how to think about moving ahead. The "meta" theory behind every introductory class is really induction into the reality of that subject, whether it is a science or humanities course. Introductory classes help perpetuate such existing realities as literature, history, biology, chemistry, religion, and so on. Axiomatic teaching/learning in the classroom, the kind that "gets behind" the framework of a certain reality, points out the framework and what it means to recognize it, can only occur when the teacher and student both feel actively engaged in the context of the classroom.

When Wolfgang Iser states that "the history of interpretation shows clearly that such an approach [belief in one correct interpretation of a text] had to be based on external frames of reference, which as often as not were those of a sophisticated subjectivity," he unlocks the smoke and mirrors of a certain definition of objectivity that attempts to claim some finalities about life and the human experience (23). Iser also claims that "Any theory is bound to be in the nature of a construction. This also applies to the present description of the operations by which aesthetic response is set in motion through the reading process: such an analysis, however, provides a framework which enables us to assess individual realizations and interpretations of a text in relation to the conditions that have governed them. One task of a theory of aesthetic response is to facilitate intersubjective discussion of individual interpretations" (x). Because human subjects interact at incredibly complex levels, forming at the grand scale such hard to pin down organisms[1] as civilization, society, and culture, there are many aspects of reality that seem natural, common sensical, or determined. And the "seeming" can be quite real in the minds of individuals. For example, the speed limit is an abstract concept; getting pulled for speeding is a reality that can come out of that abstraction. Because the action of getting pulled by a police officer can potentially occur, the speed limit acts as a bridge between the abstraction of speeding and the "reality" of getting a speeding ticket. Nothing about the speed limit sign actually determines the pace of the cars passing by in a mechanistic way. Law enforcement is an abstract concept; giving a man or a woman a gun and uniform to enforce the law is the reality of that abstraction. Everything from the stop lights to the words you are reading right now are constructs of one degree or sort, and

[1]In his book Media Virus Douglas Rushkoff argues that the media/datasphere is alive in the same ways that a highly complex living orgnaism is alive. The current combination of cells (different countries, ideologies, etc) through the circulatory system of telecommunications and computer networks has created a new living organism he describes as the datasphere.

though it may seem unlikely that red will ever mean go or green stop, it could. It is this "could" that unveils "meta" theory.

The Reality Game

Thanks to work in fields such as sociology, anthropology, physics, natural history, psychology, popular culture, communications and so on, people in all walks of life have contact with various examples that reveal the constructed "nature" of reality. The idea of constructed reality has become quite pervasive in the every day lives of, at least, the American public. Popular culture provides some of the best examples of reality manipulation that successfully reach millions of people. One such example would include Miller Lite Beer's ad campaign in 1995-1996 that amusingly combined "gender realities," playing primarily on the differences in men's and women's culture.

In order to understand the advertising campaign's concepts if you have not seen them, you need to imagine yourself watching your television. At some break in the show you are watching, a Miller Lite Beer commercial comes on. The first perspective to keep in mind is the one that has you as the person watching the television. The first part of the commercial has a man and woman watching TV, flipping channels in an attempt to find something they both like to watch. So now you are watching people watching TV. The man and woman have each found a different show they like, but the other clearly does not want to watch. The first of these commercials had a woman wanting to watch a dog show and a man wanting to watch drag racing. In the reality constructed by the commercial, there is only one TV and the man and woman decidedly want to watch two different shows. Enter a bottle of Lite Beer from Miller. The man (and I think feminist critique could certainly unwrap the implications of this action) plunks the Miller Lite on top of the TV and presto -- drag racing dachshunds! At this moment there is a sudden shift in perspective for you as the person viewing the

commercial. The man and woman temporarily drop out of the commercial and you are now only viewing the drag racing dachshunds. You are viewing the reality created by the magic in the Miller Lite bottle. Differences (between men and women) that cannot be resolved realistically can be resolved through the magic of alcohol; and in this case, Miller Lite has the best magic. Their beer can "literally" warp reality. By the end of the commercial, you are back viewing the people in the commercial viewing the new reality created by the Miller Lite beer that has been popped on top of the TV. They are wonderfully content. The commercial is predicated on the fight for control of the TV and which show to watch (obviously considered by advertisers to be a universal experience) as well as the differences and disdain that men and women supposedly have for each other's interests. In one episode the man wants to watch hockey and the woman wants to watch the beauty pageant. To solve the dilemma they plunk a Miller Lite bottle on top of the TV and end up with "Beauty Pageant Hockey," with women on ice skates in beauty pageant dresses hitting slap shots and body checking other contestants. Other variations include "basketball jamming runway models" and "full contact golf [football/golf]."

What develops is a context in which the mass public is exposed to the constructed nature of television and movies. This exposure creates the possibility for critical thinking about the media news and news coverage of such events as Presidential elections and the Gulf War. Through such ad campaigns as the Miller Lite Beer commercials the "public at large" gets introduced to constructed reality theory in an application that is very palatable and non-threatening. But they also get a foundation from which they could begin to understand that news, the longest revered belief in objectivity through the media, is also a constructed phenomenon. All that would have to occur is exposure to a writer or thinker who could show how much Miller Lite's beer commercials have in common with the nightly news in terms of

how the two are actively constructed by producers, writers, and advertisers. Such a potential possibility has been greatly enhanced through the Rodney King and O.J. Simpson trials. As these trials unfolded before the American public in day to day television, people had first hand opportunities to see highly constructed actions going on and into a real life event -- stages set, actors with roles, attempts to manufacture drama for effect, and so on. It was not long after such media events that insightful thinkers began to make the connection between fictional reality construction and "real" reality construction. Fiction and reality differ in degree, not in design. Of course, this idea is not a grand epiphany, after all, 300 years ago Shakespeare said that "All the world's a stage." And Zen and Taoist thinkers have been communicating the same idea for thousands of years. The difference today is one of degree: the potential for this idea to affect a great many people more than at any time in history is tremendous. The information highway is more like an information atmosphere: anywhere a mind "breathes" is a place where that person's mind might not only see reality constructed, but that reality is *something* constructed.

Douglas Rushkoff, in Media Virus, argues that "The Rodney King tape has been analyzed and reanalyzed to the point where it both proves the cops' guilt and innocence" (26). If what he says is accurate, with the truth falling somewhere outside the world view of the interpreter who wants the tape situated in one of the two categories when it can actually fit in both, then the notion of some final reality cannot maintain itself. Rushkoff's argument, like Anderson's claim that "reality isn't what it used to be," further leads to understanding reality as a chaotic system and living organism. Reality is understood not as something people merely need to discover or uncover, but something they need to negotiate. The activities "where" they will negotiate reality are in conversation and interaction with others and environments. The pedagogue who teaches in the fields of rhetoric, psychology, political

science, and philosophy are operating in arenas of education that have the greatest potential for engaging and thinking about the developing complexity brought about by multi-culturalism, a growing world community that is talking with more of its members than ever before, and a developing borderless economic world nation. This grand potential can be realized microcosmically through a Transforming Classroom by addressing the problems and solutions offered in the first two chapters as the kind of things accounted for when reality is understood in just such a way as Rushkoff and Anderson present it.

Their similar explanations of reality have crucial elements of meta thinking in them because their ideas resist being reduced into a single objective framework. Meta thinking is open, flexible, alive, and complex. In fact, the common element in the solutions offered by all the theorists discussed in this work is complexity. Vygotsky, Berthoff, Friere, Elbow, Graff and all the others understand that solutions and growth occur through a better understanding of complexity and not reduction of it into cliché, sound bites. New Critical searches for the one meaning of the text, cultural literacy tests, SATs and GREs. However, none of these reductionist elements are going away anytime soon either. They are quite resilient within mass public education *because* they tout simplicity. As part of the new historical frontier of this modern era, public education has reached a degree that is truly public. The long revered, but ever changing canon of works in literature, history, political science, and just about every other field has begun to meet with debate at the theoretical rather than just the practical level.

What's most effective about the explanatory power of Anderson's notion that reality has become an argument over the very nature of belief is that it can account for works with opposing ideological positions being in the same bookstore, like the Satanic Bible and the Holy Bible or books debunking Astrology and books about Astrology. In the largest

bookstores in America, a certain democratic expression of ideas can be found. And it would be nice to think that, eventually, once all the ideas are "out there," only the best ones will survive. That may or may not happen, a good idea and a good sell are not always concurrent. Many bad ideas or incomplete ideas spread faster and farther because they have a nicer package or conveniently easy to digest theory. Now is an exciting and confusing time for thinking about almost anything because, as a culture, we seem to be at the stage where all ideas are getting some "air play," even if it is not the same degree of "air play." I think our society would do well to question an era in which a movie about sociopathic killers, Oliver Stone's "Natural Born Killers," which was meant to critique our culture's glorification of violence, proved by its success at the box office and in video rental that our culture does indeed glorify violence. It's trendy. While the world community may be shrinking in terms of actual frontier boarders; it is growing exponentially in terms of belief system frontier contact. Or, at least, it is growing in its awareness of the great multiplicity of beliefs that share existence. While many different systems of belief coexist peacefully, many do not. Real, violent conflict occurs in many places around the world where beliefs differ and cannot or will not tolerate the kinds of differences that develop when opposing views come into contact with one another. One need only reflect on the long standing conflicts of the Middle East.

That increased awareness of how belief not only shapes the perception of reality but reality itself can place pedagogy at the center of people's lives if members of the academic community understand reality as a constructed medium. Doing so places the pedagogue in very unique and unusual psychological space. S/he, at one and the same time, holds and perpetuates a belief system while realizing that his/her belief system is but one of many constructed from experience and context. In attempting to help students find inroads to the

material I have taught (critical thinking, beginning composition, narrative theory), I always use my own positions as models, but not as de facto explanations. When I teach material or ideas I attempt to explain the contexts and experiences that led me to understand and teach the material in certain ways. I also try to teach the many different ways beliefs can be evaluated, in the hopes that students will be able to find ways to incorporate the material I teach into their lives in functional and valuable ways. The students need to see the teaching/learning matrix as part and parcel of reality construction at large and within their own immediate experience. At large, constructed realities include such big concepts as society, culture, law, ethics, religion and education: concepts slow to change and hard to define because of their size and complexity. These rather large concepts are constructed out of the human matrix of interaction with others, other objects and other environments, that occur at personal and immediate levels in someone's life.

One of the interesting aspects of thinking and writing about reality construction and its relationship to rhetoric is the way in which spatial metaphors get mixed with activity. The term society covers a lot of ideological territory. At one and the same time it describes a physicality, human beings and the objects they have constructed. The term also describes a psychology, the way Americans, Asians, and Europeans view raising a family or teaching children. And it describes a system that is active, constantly evolving through and by individuals, groups, internal and external pressures, changes in technology, and whatever combination of events that can create system wide shifts. At the microcosmic level of composition studies is the meta theoretical context where people can engage in the use of words both as a medium for thought and as things that constructs some other or new concrete ideas.

The role of pedagogy in this new atmosphere of reality as constructed on all levels is crucial because instructors can continue one of the more high minded traditions in education, improving students self awareness and their ability to grapple with and fit comfortably into a variety of realities. Rhetoricians as far back as Aristotle and Isocrates understood the direct relationship of language to reality construction. Words were used with the specific intention of persuading an audience into the action of moving reality in certain directions the orator felt were in the best interest of the city state. Today, in our mass media environment, education can take on the vital role of giving its young citizens-to-be the knowledge they need to cope in a complex and colliding world. Authentic education teaches students how to teach themselves, how to become teachers for themselves and how to construct and find realities that appropriately suit them. Unlike Aristotle or Isocrates, who probably understood rhetoric and rhetorical thinking as the *way to* something an orator wanted, pedagogues today need to understand rhetoric as both the way to something and the *way it is*. Or, as Ann Berthoff puts it, "we will continually need to rethink as we try to formulate unspoken or unstated assumptions, to test one interpretation against another, to draw out the implications of definitions and propositional statements and metaphors" (107). At the heart of education's role in transforming people is each individual's search for the right path at one and the same time that they learn about and how to participate in the grand community of American and the world culture, and all the degrees of difference in between. Teaching students how to be aware that reality is a constructed, but living organism with many facets is the initial, crucial step in helping students move from being merely reactionary participants in education to self-actualizing ones. Authentic education is about helping students attain self-actualization and giving them the theory/practice to articulate and explain their self-actualization both individually and within various contexts/realities.

The Lego Factor:

How to Build a Reality

In her book, Virgin or Vamp, Helen Benedict explores the ways in which the press covers sex crimes. She reveals the way in which pre-existing "realities" about gender, sexuality, and crime intersect and become transformed or reinforced by media coverage about these crimes. She begins the book by listing several myths that are dominant in the rhetoric of the sex crime. Myth, as it fits her examples, is a blend of misinformation, misperception, and misunderstanding; but the myths are also part of the realities of many of the people who embrace them. At the very beginning of chapter one she points out that "In spite of the attempts by feminists and psychologists to explain away rape myths over the last two decades, studies have found that those myths are still alive and well. In his 1982 book, Men on Rape, Timothy Beneke interviewed a large sample of men and found that many not only blamed female victims for having been raped, but admitted to being tempted to commit rape themselves" (13). In many ways, this comment reveals the sad fact that the myths get better press than the research that attempts to break the myths, usually because the myths fit far more comfortably into sound bites than does the often complex material that explains how rape (though it involves sexual organs) is not a sexual act, but one of violence and power. From here a definition of reality can emerge not as objective truth, but the beliefs that humans act on. What becomes painfully evident from her case studies of four major sex crimes is the very real consequences that the myths produce in the courtrooms and press coverage of sex crimes.

Perhaps the key to Benedict's work is the method of her study, which encompasses a lengthy review of the day to day rhetoric of the cases. She looked at these events in

particularly non-sound bite ways, looking for the complexity rather than the reductions. She describes her search thus:

> As I went through the clips about each case, reading the day-to-day coverage, I looked for certain specifics: The attitudes toward women brought to bear on the case by the reporters, how they were expressed and how they interplayed with public reaction to the story; the public and local attitudes toward sex and violence, race, and class reflected by the coverage; the sort of vocabulary used; which issues raised by the case were picked up by the papers and which were ignored; how the accused were treated; and, above all, how the victims were portrayed (5).

This type of research shows how many different realities comprise the general or abstract notion of meta reality. It also reveals how many realities are based on false notions and incomplete data, not an uncommon aspect of much of the rhetoric in public discourse about students and education these days. Benedict's work clearly demonstrates, though, that the media could have participated in the reality construction of the cases differently if it had taken the time to recognize the various choices that could have been made in reporting the cases as they progressed. Not only that, but Benedict also shows how the media clearly influenced and constructed much of the reality about the cases. From the very first case, she shows us how the people in the situation become characters in a drama and how that affected everyone from the victims to the judges, jury members, and lawyers.

Her first case study (Chapter three) dealt with "The 1978-1979 Greta and John Rideout Marital Rape Case." She begins by saying that "an unlikely young couple in the small city of Salem, Oregon, became famous overnight. Reporters from all over the country and from as far away as Germany and England descended on the bewildered pair and on the modest courthouse of Salem and stayed for over a week, exciting and disturbing the natives and creating what one local reporter called 'a spectacle'" (43). Benedict is careful to explain how a reality in which German reporters would end up in a small town on the western side of

the United States could be constructed. As it turned out, this reality could not have occurred if another change in a preexisting reality had not occurred in 1977. In that year, "Oregon had become the third state in the nation to make marital rape illegal" (43). The preexisting reality, one that maintained the seventeenth-century British common law which stated that a husband could not be charged with rape since his wife "was his to have whenever he wanted," had been altered because of new critiques of the "real" situation of women by feminists (43). Both the change in the law and the conditions of the case contributed to a context in which reality construction and deconstruction became a whirlwind force in the little town of Salem.

Benedict's work is valuable to this dissertation because the framework of the Salem context has a meta idea that is common with every classroom context in the education system. The classroom is "axiomatic" by design, a design which just happens to be a conceptual construction for constructing "realities" in the most explicit of ways ... teaching/initiating students into the culture and reality of whatever subject is being taught. As Benedict wrote and researched the Rideout case, she constantly discovered points in the development of the event where certain choices could have been made to present a more appropriate, and perhaps truthful, view of the case. One such example occurred when the presiding judge "decided that evidence of Greta [Rideout's] prior sexual conduct was admissible at the trial. That decision allowed John [Rideout's] defense attorney to bring up evidence damaging to Greta, while leaving her with no legal recourse to deny or explain his allegations" (51). It brought Greta's sexual life to trial along with and eventually in place of John's act of rape. The decision of the judge created a reality in which Greta's past sexual relationships, and even her fantasies, could be brought forth in the trial. Presumably this decision by the judge should have had a relevant bearing on the case, but as it moved forward

it simply clouded the issue that John was a man who had problems with aggression and that he would take them out on his wife when he felt angry and helpless. What is key here is that the judge *made a choice* about something that could have remained irrelevant (and probably should have) to the case: he *created a reality.*

Benedict's book is one among many that are exploring issues of reality construction in all fields of science, social development, and education. Benedict's study and others that are being published in this decade attempt to use accessible language and the widely common texts of popular culture, movies, and music. Once the reserve of philosophers, sociologists, anthropologists, and psychologists, the discourse about reality construction can now be found in such popular places as comic books.[2] Interestingly enough the meta theory of reality construction comes in many theoretical and practical packages. In the darkest halls of academia, where the scholarly monks and trendy graduate students live in isolate enclaves and speak jargonistic languages, bantering around terms like deconstruction, "the trace," epistemology, skepticism, post-modernism, the identity of the "other," and dialectic, the language of reality construction is safely encased in the hermetically sealed environs of the university members that feel it is the duty of the "public" to come to them. I have been a part of a few of those conversations in my time. But reality construction is no less "discussed" in the movie "The Last Action Hero" or "Hot Shots;" the language just happens to be accessible to more people. Benedict's exploration of the media on sex crimes is a particularly strong example of accessibility because it focuses on two elements of modern society that invade almost every home, the media and sex as public conversation. What Benedict's book does, like Anderson's and Rushkoff's, is use readily available contexts, texts, and language to

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[2]In 1994 DC Comics ran a story in their comic book Justice League Europe that had the super heroes battling a villain name Deconstructo. He had a weapon that would allow him to bend reality to his will. The story was written by Gerard Jones, who has a Masters in English, and who probably had a good dose of Jacques Derrida during his studies.

explore difficult theory about reality construction. One of the problems with reading about construction and deconstruction a la Jacques Derrida or Paul de Man or the French feminists or any other host of narrow academic voices is that the reader needs years of training to learn their particular and peculiar studies of language and literature: they need to be graduate students. Because of the technological evolution[3] of human society into an organism of tremendous complexity, a teenager actively surfing the internet from his or her home computer probably negotiates, through application, as much or more about reality construction these days as many of the elder statesmen of academia who have been seriously thinking about constructivism, but who grew up before the internet rather than with it.

Anderson also describes a problem that Gerald Graff criticizes the academy about in Beyond the Culture Wars, that the jargonistic language and thinking of academics is creating a rift among themselves and university attendees that is damaging the view and support of universities as viable parts of the system of American education. The most scathing critiques can be found in casual conversation or among recent graduates of universities that feel the university does not deal with "the real world." When Anderson writes about Derrida he says, "Derrida, a professor of the history of philosophy at the Ecole Normale Superieure in Paris, writes with a Continental intellectual's conviction that nothing you want people to regard as profound should ever be expressed clearly. His style is to drift mysteriously about the subject, wandering off into inscrutable digressions and refusing utterly to give the reader anything so square as one of those 'in this essay I shall attempt to demonstrate --' introductions" (89). The Graff quote from chapter one identifies Derrida's approach as an impending problem for the future of the academy, the likelihood that academians who hold

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[3] Mass communication, modern advertising, email, and the internet all contribute to everyday complexity that each new generation masters as part of their growing up. What older generations theorized about complexity and chaos are more and more developing as part of the functional reality of the generations following them.

tightly to jargonistic language will continue to create an atmosphere of hostility and negativity towards higher education among the tax paying public and the students. In his preface to Beyond the Culture Wars, Graff begins with the assumption that writing to a more general and public audience is the future of academic dissemination of ideas:

> Writing for a general audience is not an easy thing for the average academic. As writers we academics are spoiled. We are used to writing for other academics, usually those in our particular fields, and this protection from outside perspectives lets us fall into cozy ways of thinking and expressing ourselves. You might think that our students would provide the outside perspective that would force us to make ourselves clearer to nonacademics, but students after all are captive audiences and are not always in a position to tell us when we aren't making sense (vi).

Right now that negativity is rather vague and unfocused, but higher learning must be on guard against getting too high minded about itself at a time when every institution may suddenly and intensely come under the scrutiny of public officials or citizens through the media. One of the more penetrating critiques that is constantly gaining ground is the utilitarian argument that universities are not preparing students to become active and productive citizens. Rather, students are coming away with degrees that have little or no application in "the real world."[4] My own experience with Derrida and his crew nicely concluded in my graduate career when I sold his books for a mere one third their value to a used bookstore on the University of North Carolina at Greensboro campus. And in surprisingly deconstructionist fashion I found them still in that store almost a year after I had sold them.

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[4] One of the few truly honest pieces of advice that I received as a graduate student finishing my Masters came one day when a professor told me outright that I would need to have a PhD to find a job teaching at a university and probably even a community college; otherwise the best I could hope for would probably be part time work. A bachelor's degree in English is like saying, "I went to college for four years, and now I have to find a real job."

The reason I tell this little anecdote has to do with the changing environment of the academy in its evolution towards teaching more and more of the general populace. The university system has to evolve with the members of the community who attend it. One of the great things about teaching older returning students is that they not only reflect the changing perception of younger students attending college[5], but will vocalize their dissatisfaction if they feel a course is not providing them with what they want or feel they need. They have the awareness to state openly that they are paying for something that they expect to find a use for in their lives, not merely a job related use, but a practical use, with practical being defined as something they put into practice in their lives. They also tend to realize the responsibility for getting what they hope for is a negotiation between the student and the instructor. Each one brings something to the experience of learning that has to connect in order for optimum learning to occur. Optimum teaching occurs when the information and ideas of a class find their way into practical application in a student's life rather than just into a notebook and back on a test. At the very least, it occurs when the student can understand that the information and ideas may be important in a context they are moving towards even if the application is not immediate. Practical, as an idea, has great range, and need not reflect the more mundane aspect of being "merely useful for getting a job." Younger students sense and feel this, but tend to have a harder time expressing it directly. The terms I have heard most to describe a course that does not connect with their lives are "bullshit class."

When my students have talked about a B/S class, they mean a class that they took to "get out of the way." A reality construction theory about life, and more directly about the

[5] While it might be hard to say that a majority of students of any part of the modern era of education ever came to the university with high mindedness, a great many are coming to the university with cynicism and skepticism. The kind of thinking that develops when college is perceived as a necessity rather than a choice.

classroom, provides a way for instructors to help understand and unlock student frustrations regarding their own learning situation. A B/S class comes out of disconnection; the student simply cannot see or find the practical or emotional application of the class with regard to his/her interests and so the class fails to teach them anything. Instructors need to realize that a student, almost by the very definition of what a student is, needs help in understanding why sitting in such and such class is supposed to affect their lives in some important and practical way. What reality construction theory provides is the direct discourse about the threshold that exists between students growing (but not yet fully developed) and instructor knowledge (growth that has matured). Too often the teaching situation is one in which this step is taken for granted rather than recognized as the pedagogical axiom that is the center of learning. No matter the material or the style of instruction or the level of coursework, if this connection is assumed by the instructor but not present in the student, then the teaching will fail. The deception (bamboozlement) for an instructor often comes when a student or several students "get it" without a requisite explanation of why they should "get it," which encourages the instructor in the belief that some students "get it" and some don't. Reality construction theory begs this question deeply by suggesting that the "don't" students have not been shown why they should "get it." The other side of the problem comes, often, from the fact that students have not developed even enough growth to articulate why they don't get something, which further requires of the instructor to call upon his/her skills as a pedagogue to help the student at even, or more importantly, just that level.

Fortunately, this axiom has been thoroughly explored by the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky and presented in his idea of the Zones of Proximal Development in Thought and Language. While I briefly touched upon how the zones of proximal development worked as part of the discussion in chapter one regarding the nature of instruction and the

dialectical relationship between the student and instructor. Vygotsky's research more importantly shows why the zones of proximal development best explain learning. Undergirding the idea of zones of proximal development is the meta idea of reality as something constructed by humans out of their socio-historical evolution. According to Vygotsky, all of human learning is part of a massive socio-historical and biological matrix that is rather organic and quite complex. Some sections of the matrix can be quite chaotic, fluid, and mutable (usually the socio-historical aspects like language and culture) and others can be more defining (the biological aspects like one's gender, skin color, height). Both relate in infinite variety dialectically (how one's biological aspects relate in and to socio-historical aspects).[6] Achieving understanding of this matrix as something constantly under construction, especially through Vygotsky's research of the formative stages of childhood, is the first step towards understanding how a pedagogy based on reality construction principles is crucial, even necessary to talking about and practicing teaching that succeeds on many practical and theoretical levels.

Lev Vygotsky: The Psychology of Reality Construction

One thing all people have to admit to is influence. No matter the cutting edge or traditional a thinker's ideas, s/he arrived at their understanding of the idea through subject to subject and subject to object interaction in a cultural matrix at a certain time in history. Even if leaps of Einsteinian breadth occur, they are still made from preexisting cultural and scientific knowledge, just one more way in which humans distinguish themselves from any other organism on this planet. Our history is not simply a matter of genetic coding, but a history, written and oral, that allows human evolution to develop at rates and in areas that no other animal has the capability to achieve. In a mere matter of a few thousand years, humans

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[6] Helen Benedict's research would be a perfect example of how someone's gender is "played out" in the socio-historical matrix and how gender in turn shapes the socio-historical part of the overall matrix.

have hardwired the entire planet, turning the earth into a developing and evolving cybernetic/organic environment that allows information, culture, and people to traverse one side of the planet and the other with the psychological immediacy of the internet or the physical speed of jet propulsion. In more individual, human ways, the stages of human development go far beyond those of any other animal species, both in degree and type. The foremost place for reality construction is in the human mind. And perhaps the field of psychology best reveals this ability because no other animal has the capacity to be self reflective in the way that humans can. So while animals may have speech or language or use tools, even the animals highest level of use of these things cannot match the levels that humans can eventually attain, often at young ages.

It is in this psychological space that one can begin to understand and think about how humans are uniquely equipped to construct reality. Lev Vygotsky has concentrated his work around this "conceptual moment" in Mind in Society and Thought and Language and created explanatory models of human psychology that help map out the psychological frameworks that aid humans in being able to construct reality. In a general sense, humans' ability to conceptualize *because of* speech is what gives them the unique ability to manipulate their environment and store the history of their ideas in written language. Vygotsky's research appropriately focuses on the transitional stages that occur in childhood development that essentially show where and how children become and demonstrate their uniquely human ways for solving problems and affecting realities. Vygotsky points out, "although children's use of tools during their preverbal period is comparable to that of apes, as soon as speech and the use of signs are incorporated into any action, the action becomes transformed and organized along entirely new lines. The specifically human use of tools is thus realized, going beyond the more limited tools possible among higher animals" (MIS 24). A further

insight Vygotsky provides is that, "a child's speech is as important as the role of action in attaining the goal. Children not only speak about what they are doing; their speech and action are part of *one and the same complex psychological function*, directed toward the solution of the problem at hand" (MIS 25).

Because human perception of reality is so uniquely different from animal perception, reality is not just something humans merely react to. This discussion in a text on pedagogy is vital because it helps to understand that the complexity of human minds is the origin of reality construction. In many ways, since human complexity occurs at such young ages[7], it becomes quite easy to forget that the development of the human mind constantly occurs as part of a historical *and* biological growth. When children begin naming "objects in reality," "*the nature of [their] development itself changes*, from biological to sociohistorical. Verbal thought is not an innate, natural form of behavior, but is determined by a historical-cultural process and has specific properties and laws that cannot be found in natural forms of thought and speech" (T&L 94-95) In other words, it's not in my genetic code to speak English, Japanese, French or any language. Nor is it in my genetic code to understand concepts like fairness, friendliness, or justice. "Once we acknowledge the historical character of verbal thought, we must consider it subject to all the premises of historical materialism, which are valid for any historical phenomenon in human society. It is only to be expected that on this level the development of behavior will be governed essentially by the general laws of the historical development of human society" (T&L 94-95). Here is a central point crucial to the argument of this text, that our understanding of realities is something we create from the past realities created before us. Because those realities were created, we can manipulate and

[7] In Thought and Language Vygotsky describes "a certain moment at about the age of two" when thought and speech "meet and join to initiate a new form of behavior." (82) This new behavior is a childs discovery of the naming process.

change them or perpetuate them. Of all the various people engaged in reality construction and perpetuation (from families to corporations), pedagogues represent a group of people who, theoretically anyway, operate in the context of reality discourse (whether about biology, history, or language itself) in a very conscious way.

The conscious way of seeing and participating in any field of pedagogy as part of a reality construction matrix follows from the understanding that in complex systems all information, theory, ethics, personality, and so on are interconnected. Even when "the discontinuities and jumps from one mode of activity to another are too great for the relationship to seem evident," there was a relationship that fed into the creation of the activity (MIS 116). A common misapplication of knowledge that is antithetical to this understanding is reification. Reification is the process by which abstract concepts are converted into entities. Perhaps one of the best studies of the real dangers inherent in reification is found in Stephen J. Gould's The Mismeasure of Man. In this work Gould explores the reified concept of intelligence as it has been converted into entities like IQ and Scholastic Aptitude Tests. With wonderful clarity Gould traces reified notions of intelligence through the early history of this country into the mid 20th century to show how intelligence -- as an entity that can be measured -- has done great harm. With a strong sense of ironic insightfulness, Gould tells how Alfred Binet, the man who is credited with creating IQ testing, predicted its misuse if it should become a reified notion. Originally, the IQ testing was designed by Binet to help identify children who needed help learning. Or more accurately, it was designed to show what was missing in someone's learning rather than to show what someone had with regard to abilities to learn. The testing was expected to be applied to learning disabled or learning disadvantaged to help locate starting points in teaching those people (Gould 146-151). Binet, himself, "greatly feared that his practical device, if reified as an entity, could be perverted

and used as an indelible label, rather than as a guide for identifying children who needed help" (Gould 151).

Not only does Gould map out how concepts have been reified, but how reified concepts have been used to promote political and social agendas. Once IQ testing became entrenched as part of the new American zeitgeist in determining people's intelligence, it was applied with appalling abuse to immigrants trying to enter into the United States. Through the use of an interpreter, immigration officials gave incoming people IQ tests to determine if they were fit to become United States citizens. As Gould points out, imagine people disoriented from a trip, arriving on the dock of a place where they have few or no connections and being asked to take a test:

> For the evident reason, consider a group of frightened men and women who speak no English and who have just endured an oceanic voyage in steerage. Most are poor and have never goon to school; many have never held a pencil or pen in their hand. They march off the boat; one of Goddard's intuitive women takes them aside shortly thereafter, sits them down, hands them a pencil, and asks them to reproduce a figure shown to them a moment ago, but now withdrawn from their sight. Could their failure be a result of testing conditions, of weakness, fear, or confusion, rather than of innate stupidity? (166).

No wonder many immigrants were considered "feebleminded" and not allowed to enter the country (Gould 158-171). Gould uncovers through his research a consistent pattern of construction and reconstruction of the way human intelligence is viewed and measured and how these things impact on the social history of this country, and how social history impacted on research.

One thing any good researcher in any field has to be on the guard against is the tendency to manipulate "realities" to fit his/her belief systems. A misapplied or misunderstood relationship between reality and belief is the sort of thing that often leads the most diligent of researchers to ignore or overlook information that will effectively debunk

their work. A good example of how social history affected and reified the research in intelligence studies comes from a predecessor of Alfred Binet, Paul Broca. Broca worked out intelligence quotients using physical rather than psychological methods: he measured skull sizes. Part and parcel of his research was the a priori assumption that women were inferior intellectually to men. This position was not in question, but de facto, so his work was not meant to challenge this hypothesis, but simply to reinforce it. Gould's research shows that Broca used all sorts of blindnesses to get his findings to suit the social beliefs of his day, which included some rather negative views of non-Caucasian races as well as women. Since research methods were still new at the time of Broca's work, Gould concludes that Broca was never intentionally corrupt in his research work or methods, but he needed to apply certain research tricks to get results consistent with his beliefs. Perhaps the most telling bias that was applied in his cranial measurements was Broca's use of seed to fill and measure skulls of men and women of various races. One of his "tricks" was to simply pour seed into a female skull while he would pour *and* pack down the seed in a male skull. Gould finds when studying Broca's research that the data clearly shows that Broca's methods however odd and however the methods connected with the theory (size=intelligence) actually reveal little difference between male and female cranial size, which should have lead Broca to conclude that men and women were rather close intellectually. Yet, it did not. The facts did not speak for themselves and they never will. Of all the translators or promoters of "the facts" the pedagogue is one of the most direct. His/her unique position in a system designed around accumulated facts and ideas is to construct new ideas and thinking, maintain successful and working ideas, and deconstruct outmoded or erroneous theories and information.

Essentially the constructed nature of reality is a common thread of meta theory that undergirds each theorist's respective ideological positions in each of their respective fields. Broca had the research method to make a breakthrough regarding views of intelligence during his age, just not in a way that would be culturally accepted by his peers or society, which closed his mind off to the possibility that men and women could be equally intelligent. Gould, and many others, continue to fight the battle against reified theories of human knowledge, ethics, and belief in the only arena and only way possible, through educational institutions demonstrating through example and argument. The struggle against oversimplification will likely be one that is more central to all pedagogues than the struggle for simplification. The very difficult and sometimes frustrating part of this challenge is that one cannot use "reified methods" to prove the rightness of position. It is all about persuasion to and presentation of a theory of reality that is open, explanatory, and adaptable. The grain of truth in the idea that only complex ideas can be explained in complex ways is that complex ideas do exist and do require of people to take the time to think about and consider their complexity. But works like Walter Truett Anderson's and Douglas Rushkoff's clearly show that the road to understanding complexity does not have to be winding, uphill, without rest areas, or guideposts. And conversely, reified measurements hold a common myth -- that complexity can be reduced into simple measurements -- which really has more to say about issues of ethics, expediency, and power than about how reality is.

Reducing complexity usually helps with efficiency at the cost of richness and fullness. The question that gets begged is whether university education was ever intended to become a fast food experience. Or more accurately, does the desire to educate an entire population preclude the movement of education into a fast food chain of service. My own experience with attending college and that of my students often shows a huge discrepancy

between the reality constructed in the pages of university handbooks and advertisements and the actual experiences of the students and instructors. Usually the actuality is a movement away from the nicely photographed sections of the campus and the inviting rhetoric of caring for student welfare to the actual experiences of overworked instructors, oversized classes, and limited opportunities. What is useful about understanding the difference is not that the learning environment does not work, but that it is a learning environment of a certain sort. I find the "false advertising" of much of education deplorable, but only because it sets expectations that education (in certain contexts[8]) cannot or does not intend to meet. It does not have to be that way. While I may certainly see advantages in teaching a small group of students (say a class of ten or less) in terms of the amount of material covered or the amount of help I can give, I realize that other teaching situations are equally valid and simply require different technique to ensure that learning takes place optimally.

It is wrong to suggest that students in a class of two hundred will get the same kind of education that students in a class of ten will get covering the same material. The reality is different and so must be the teaching and the presentation of the teaching. Understanding this point is key to thinking like a pedagogue. A pedagogue takes any situation at hand in the education system and finds the best method through theory to teach the material at hand. The mistakes and frustration in teaching often comes when reified thinking is applied to different teaching circumstances (including material, student body, university expectations, etc.) as if one method will suit all situations. The grand epiphany of intersubjective reality construction

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[8] A university system in which professors are expected to direct dissertations, master theses, write publications, attend committe meetings, organize candidates schedules, host guest speakers and advise students cannot expect to provide the same degree of service to students where professors are not pressured with publication demands or where advising is handled by a separate branch of the university system. Yet, almost all college handbooks dip into the rhetoric of personal attention to student needs. Some university systems (mostly state run) simply require more independence of the student body than others.

belief is that teaching, learning, living all occur through negotiation of subjects to subjects and subjects to objects in ways that require of the pedagogue the vigilance to adapt and be responsive to life's complexity, to know when to simplify out of necessity (not as endings, but as bridges throughout complex systems), and to trust in the student's desire to learn and name their own learning.

Intersubjectivity: The Matrix of Reality Construction

If one agrees to the assumption that reality is constructed, then one can begin to ask what the components of reality construction have to be. The components are not the pure states of subjectivity and objectivity, but subjects and objects, with each human subject as the center of his or her own matrix. Each of us, me as the writer and you as the reader, are engaged in intersubjective interaction from the time of our birth to the time of our death. Sometimes subjects (people) interact with other subjects (people) on an immediate level, through face to face conversation and sometimes over greater distance, reading Shakespeare long after his death and the death of his cultural era. Part of the matrix has to do with how people interact with objects (cars, guns, television, etc.) or "non-subject" matters (weather, their health, pollution, etc.). In a reality that is constructed by both subject and object forces, the human being (each individual) is the one creature that has the greatest field of interpretation and perception. The degree of relation and interpretation for humans far exceeds how any other animal deals with other subjects, objects and non-subject situations. And that degree of relation comes directly out of the human use of language, spoken and written, as the way in which to develop a social evolution along with a biological one. Humans have proven to be the one animal to change the environment most to suit its particular needs. Unlike animals who require certain conditions in order to colonize and spread and maybe even eventually change an environment, humans can move directly into

most any environment and make it suitable for human development because their social history has provided ways to fight disease, construct cities and so on.

The human capacity for language and written history remains the one aspect of evolutionary development that sets humans into a uniquely defined category far away from the rest of the animals in the world, no matter what other similarities exist. Perhaps this difference is the reason why so many psychologists, sociologists, and anthropologists spend a great many written words and energy trying to explain the difference. Ultimately, it means that a discussion of human beings and their relation to reality is uniquely framed by the complexity of the human brain and the way it functions or can function in a matrix of subject to subject and subject to object relationships. This grand matrix is best understood as a complex of intersubjective relationships. Friere describes a person who understands this matrix as a radical. The radical person for Friere is "never a subjectivist. For this individual the subjective aspect exists only in relation to the objective aspect (the concrete reality; which is the object of analysis). Subjectivity and objectivity thus join in a dialectical unity producing knowledge in solidarity with action, and vice versa" (20). The center of the matrix is the human capacity to put something other than himself/herself into a psychological position of object analysis. Sometimes that analysis is immediate and requires immediate action/reaction; a car is coming at me and I need to move out of its way. Sometimes the analysis is far more complex and requires prediction; earthquakes are common phenomenon in the California area so houses and roads must be designed to withstand seismic shifts as much as possible. Human beings still are the measure of all things, whether the things are those that they create or those that come to them from outside themselves. Also, much of what men and women have created and passed down through history -- laws, education, work

-- has reified into institutions and systems that function well away from individual perception.

As much as any one human being might like to think that the only thing that really matters is his/her opinion or that "the facts speak for themselves." The matter, fact or no, lies somewhere in between. And if Vygotsky's research is accurate, movement into intersubjective thinking is a movement into higher complexity. His research with children found that "when a child moves up to that level, he has partly overcome his egocentrism. He no longer mistakes connections between his own impressions for connections between things -- a decisive step away from syncretism toward objective thinking"[9] (112). Vygotsky does not mean that a child suddenly becomes aware of or in tune with some non-subjective experience, but that the child has begun to realize that other subjects exist and potentially think differently than s/he does. Objective thinking of this sort participates in the world of relating in multiple ways, not just the first ego centered way of what a child merely wants. As a child begins to encounter relating of different sorts, usually in the form of obstacles that s/he cannot overcome (i.e., when crying does not get the desired attention or begging does not get the desired toy), s/he begins the trek into intersubjective experience. When the child runs up against a situation in which its simplest desire of "I want" is not easily and quickly met, then s/he has met with an object or subject that is having an impact on rather than being impacted by the child. This simple basic introduction to reality as something outside the child's inner world is the basis for the dualistic matrix that will eventually grow exponentially into his or her personality and how s/he relate to the much larger "objects" of culture, society, education, work, etc.

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[9] One should be careful to make the distinction between objective thinking and objectivity. The objective thinking that Vygotsky refers to had to do with thinking about things as objects apart for egocentric experience and not objectivity, which is the annihilation of ego.

This foray into the basic building blocks of intersubjective experience must be carefully understood as a mere model. The actual development of a child into an adolescent and into adulthood is a multiplicity of dialectic experiences between the ego of each individual person and the culture and context of thousands of subjects and objects that each person relates to daily. The model is merely presented to argue that how human beings understand reality is built into an organic matrix of subject to subject and subject to object relations. Or perhaps more broadly, but maybe more accurately, the matrix is composed of what each person creates out of themselves and what each person comes into contact with that is outside of themselves. Discussion of child psychological development is particularly useful in arguing the idea that reality is constructed because the interaction of an individual with things outside of himself/herself occurs in "first time" sequence, meaning that the intersubjective experience of children at the earliest stages of their development has not yet been internalized. By the time an instructor at a college sees his/her students much of the once socio-historical experiences that have contributed to a person's development have already been internalized and psychologically reified. Hence, people can banter about the terms subjective and objective because they do not recognize that their understanding of even these terms is intersubjectively determined. One distinction that might be helpful to make here has to do with actual experience and reflective awareness. All humans respond and relate to other subjects and otherness in general, but not everyone is conscious of it. However, more and more people, in general, are being brought to a higher level of awareness that their experience in reality is one of fluidity rather than fixity. Thanks to mass communications, popular culture, and a global economy, more and more people are becoming vaguely aware that reality is very different from what it used to be at any other time in history.

This shift represents a monumental opportunity for higher learning to reassert its vital and necessary role in the lives of people in non-science/technical/business areas. Where the university can be on the cutting edge of this potential is by developing a conversation and discourse and curriculum that is responsive to the ever changing and intersubjective experience of the students. At the extreme end, this curriculum and discourse would be theory centered at the foundation level of student experience, in the introductory and core courses. Understanding that learning comes from intersubjective relationships is key to the type of pedagogy I want to argue towards and demonstrate by chapter five. When instructors remind themselves that reality is something constructed, they attach themselves to the axiom of interaction that Bruner describes in Actual Minds, Possible Worlds:

> Indeed, the act of construing another person is almost inevitably problematic. For all that, the choice of one construal rather than another virtually always has real consequences for how we deal with others. Our construal of character, indeed, is our first and perhaps most important step in dealing with another. It is this that makes the very act of interpreting a person -- whether in fiction or in life -- inherently dramatic. (39)

It's like walking on water, psychologically speaking. And what each pedagogue hopes to accomplish is showing his/her students how to walk on water also. That is the miracle of teaching.

As I said above, when students reach the university classroom, they have probably never been exposed to the idea that reality is something constructed out of intersubjective experience. They do, however, have all sorts of jargon for recognizing reality constructed situations that they have encountered and figured out a way to deal with. One of the many common ways for expressing the separateness of their reality with that of the teacher's has to do with "giving teachers what they want." Students will readily admit (when given the actual freedom to do so) that they have had plenty of instructors who promised to give them

freedom only to "blindside" them later with restrictions. They have heard the politically correct lingo from one or two instructors in writing courses in high school or college that promised they could write whatever they want, only to discover that what they really needed to do was figure out what the teacher wanted. How much of this type of experience is "real" is not so important as the perception the students have, which is one where the teacher holds a certain reality in his/her mind that the student needs to figure out and put into a paper. When students say that they have never been good at B/Sing, they mean that they have never been good at figuring out and reproducing the "reality" that the instructor values. Two subtle premises are hidden in the discourse of these students that interrelate 1) that the teacher is not beholden to objective truth and 2) if they could just figure out the teacher's agenda (what they want), they could successfully get past that teacher's reality without giving up their own. A student who believes s/he "bullshitted" through a paper has a perception of reality *different from* that of the instructor. What that student, though, often misses is that both realities probably have some, if not equal, validity.

In this situation there is a mosaic of interaction of the sort that Clifford Geertz describes in Local Knowledge. Near the end of his essay, "'Native's Point of View': Anthropological Understanding," he talks about how durable a person's individuality is while that same person can assume other roles to make it appear that s/he is really like something else. "What makes the mosaic [of interaction] work is the confidence that one can be totally pragmatic, adaptive, opportunistic, and generally ad hoc in one's relations with others -- a fox among foxes, a crocodile among crocodiles -- as one wants without any risk of losing one's sense of who one is. Selfhood is never in danger because, outside the immediacies of procreation and prayer, only its coordinates are asserted" (68). This quote brought to mind the idea of the secret agent or the undercover cop, both of which portray themselves as

something other than what they actually are while maintaining the integrity of their original self. When I use the term original self, I do not mean some reified personality that never changes, but a personality or identity that existed prior to the experience of going undercover and one that remains distinct even when performing actions suitable for the undercover context and not the original identity. I often find that students feel they are engaged in "undercover work" because that is the only way they will be accepted by the organization so they can get the secret information they need before they return to the context in which their original personality can freely express itself. Many administrative rules contribute to the undercover situation as do many teaching philosophies. And both contribute to one another. Required electives (a great oxymoron if there ever was one) best create such a situation. Many students find that all the elective choices are ones they would not make if they had the option to avoid electives altogether. Since they do not have that option, they chose what is either available or the course that they think will be the easiest (usually by going to the bookstore and looking at the number of texts required for the course). Then they enter an environment where they (as they see it) have no power and must find a way to successfully get to the end of the course. They become secret agents and try to find the role that will get them through the course by investing as little effort and time as possible.

Teaching required electives can be equally limiting for the instructors. If an instructor really believes that a course is needed by the students and certain standards must be maintained for the course to be "appropriate," then s/he can easily adopt a teaching philosophy that has only a cursory regard for student interests. Another problem arises if the instructor has certain expectations regarding the prior knowledge students are supposed to have before entering the course. It is extremely important to attempt to ascertain where students are in their studies regarding the material before launching into a discussion or

lecture about the material. Successful pedagogy is more than capable of finding ways to develop a learning community that allows participants experienced in the material to grow along with members of the class who are encountering the material for the first time. Instructors have to be aware of this dynamic if they want learning to occur optimally.

While Geertz is right that human beings can portray themselves as something other than what they actually are, it can also happen that during such a portrayal actual change in identity can occur. In a related way, Anderson discusses brainwashing as a prime demonstration of how certain portions of reality (our belief in certain concepts or ideologies) are conceptual things constructed in our minds that can be deconstructed and reconstituted through brainwashing (118-120). Brainwashing actually describes the degree of a technique that is present in varying degrees of extremity, ranging from brainwashing (a complete shift from one belief to another) to propaganda (aggressive persuasion) to advertising (manipulative persuasion). Each of these concepts operates from the understanding that reality is something that people can be made or manipulated or persuaded to think about in certain ways. In a similar, but less negative way, Peter Elbow presents his idea of methodological belief in Embracing Contraries, whereby thinkers actively attempt to believe in the ideas and thoughts of others to better understand them. What develops from all of this information is a continuum of intersubjective experience, some situations in which identity is maintained against other realities and some in which identity is transformed by other realities. If a pedagogue is to succeed in transforming students, s/he will have to be able to find the identity that the student believes s/he has, which may be a very new experience for the student and the instructor.[10]

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[10] Chapter 5, which will look at case studies of actual classes and students, will further explore this point.

This proposition can sometimes be quite hard to understand considering that some of the identities students come to the class with can be rather disconcerting. It is one thing, for example, to talk about racist behavior in a general sense or when reading about it in an essay; it is quite another to have student in a class whose socio-historical background is out of a family and town in which s/he has been taught to believe that one race or another is inferior. That student becomes a secret agent in classrooms that begin a discussion of race assuming that racist viewpoints are invalid or unjustified. As Graff warns, "Acknowledging the legitimacy of social conflict, however, is not an easy thing even for Americans of goodwill. We may not hesitate to embrace cultural diversity, but when diversity leads to clashes of interests, as it naturally will, we find ourselves at a loss" (5). Or as rapper Ice-T puts it in his book The Ice Opinion (in terms far more direct, but no less accurate), "You really find out where you stand on this issue [race/racism] when intimacy is involved. You can say, 'I don't mind black people. They're cool, they can hand around.' But what if they fuck your sister or your daughter? What if they marry her and have children with her? Got a problem with that? You're racist" (131).[11] By teaching "within the conflict" I mean that the classroom becomes the community within which to discuss views of race. As my experience with young students has shown me, no matter how "incomplete" I may think their understanding of racial issues or economic issues, they do have an understanding from which they operate that I must take as valid if I am to hope to have them participating in the class in an authentic way, rather than as some secret agent. Granting validity to positions I disagree with may be the first step in getting that student to listen to another position, to transforming them to a position that shows

[11] Fortunately or unfortunately (if the issue is equal treatment) this attitude can be held from any perspective. A white male could have written these words impling relationships with black or hispanic or asian women. In any community where members of a cultural group have in their mind that racial boundaries should not be crossed through acts of intimacy, racism exists in the minds of those individuals.

greater application of what humans know about race and how it does and or does not relate to intelligence, goodness, ethics, and success or failure. Because a pedagogue acknowledges validity about a position or belief that does not mean that s/he is necessarily agreeing with that position. To disregard outright a position because it is wrong is to ignore one of the fundamental assumptions of reality construction theory -- that inaccurate or misapplied information often functions quite well in reality (as Stephen Gould's example regarding IQ testing demonstrated). Also, the entire concept of "wrongness" can get begged in an intersubjective matrix of reality. Right and wrong come from the composite ethics of intersubjective relationships among people in a culture and with their culture's history and laws. And since we live in the culture, rightness and wrongness easily become reified notions that take on the appearance of "the way things are." The sometimes difficult subtlety in discussing such issues as right/wrong from a constructivist viewpoint is the potential confusion between talking about notions as reified and realizing that reified notions affect real action. The person that thinks right and wrong are simply concepts to be apprehended and easily understood (not ideas constructed out of centuries of socio-historical intersubjective interplay) act out their lives just fine without ever "getting behind" rightness and wrongness.

On one level, the meta level, the pedagogue and the student occupy the same "space;" they both are part of the larger intersubjective matrix of reality, but they do not necessarily share the same degree of experience and knowledge. In many ways, it is not access to objective reality that pedagogues bring to the classroom, but greater experience and knowledge of the roads that students are likely to travel in their thinking and experience. If I have concluded that racism is "wrong," I did so by traveling some abstract meta paths the same as a racist, but with different outcomes. I met people of different races, I heard peers

and adults talk about other races in certain ways. I read material (newspapers, books, magazines) that all presented races other than my own in certain ways. An important step down from this abstract meta-level is, of course, how I met people of different races and how my peers and parents talked about different races and which stories I read in the newspaper or books and saw on television. While some situations certainly encourage one position over another, racist and non-racist positions travel socio-historically. As a result, there are no guarantees that a person in a racist environment will be a racist or a person in a non-racist environment will be non-racist. It is the exception in each of these contexts that proves that reality is something shaped out of intersubjective experience and choice. From the intersubjective matrix people make decisions regarding their views on race and its role in their life and the life of people around them and how they would "view" race in general.

The pedagogue's unique role is found in his/her insight and awareness of this intersubjective experience and how to use that knowledge to teach and transform students. Whether the knowledge is of a scientific nature or a social one, knowledge is transmitted socially. Because knowledge has many different aspects, a distinction of some value can be made between scientific and social ideas (the combustion engine and fairness). While gravity may be conveniently easier to demonstrate[12] than, say, good poetry, both require the arguments and proofs to be transmitted through intersubjective experience, textually (from subjects/people not present) or personally (in a teacher or friend or parent). Fortunately for gravity, personal or ethical evaluations are not really part and parcel of proving its function. My likes and dislikes regarding the limits of my vertical leap or my inability to fly on my own will have little impact on proving or disproving gravity, but my feelings and experiences

[12] Ease in demonstration reflects the criteria needed to convince someone that x-thing is true. Good poetry tends to be on a sliding criteria scale, that can change with experience and increasing language knowledge. One good trip over your shoelaces as a child will likely provide all the demonstration a person needs to "believe in" gravity for their entire life.

most certainly can factor into my arguments for good and bad poetry. Though it is quite true that the humanities have made and still make attempts to apply scientific criteria to writing; ever searching for the poem that will demonstrate itself like gravity is misunderstanding that the richness in any literature is the openness of interpretation that it creates. A better way to demonstrate poetry in a logic similar to gravity would be to talk about the poem in terms of complexity rather than "goodness/badness." Certainly a poem that draws upon a multiplicity of metaphors and intertextual reference is more complex than one that does not. But then again the pleasure of literary study is only partly explored if just the technical aspects of it are explored. And if Vygotsky is accurate, "right," and form and function cannot be separated (or should not), then the humanities will ever be "plagued" with issues of what is good, bad, better, or worse.

Fields of Interpretation:

The Hit and Miss of Intention/Interpretation

In terms of reality construction, though, the intersubjective experience presents one very powerful key to human development. Human beings can literally change their minds regarding an ideological position. They can be transformed. The extreme example of brainwashing that Anderson mentioned in his book merely reveals a meta position that flows concurrent in the lives of human beings interacting with each other, cultural systems, and day to day objects. People's view of reality is based on belief through experience and interpretation. Belief is formed through experiences as they are interpreted through each person. Whether a person has a precoded, predetermined, automated interpreting system like the ones held in fundamentalist belief systems or a fluid, flexible, probable interpreting system often held in non-foundational belief systems, the one thing all belief systems have are fields of interpretation. Religious systems often have predetermined fields of

interpretation that help simplify the interpreting chores of its followers. Acceptance of the religion brings an entire set of prescribed interpretations to the believer that allows him/her to skip over the step of working through the interpretation for him/herself. Wholesale or even partial acceptance of the belief system helps put into place fields of interpretation that give answers to moral or practical questions ranging from economics to ethics.

Not all people choose to participate in a religious system of belief, instead some people attempt to work out a system of belief based on experience or academic study or a host of any number of other belief systems. All of them use fields of interpretation in different ways and all of them use fields of interpretation. The field of interpretation is the space between a subject and subject and subject and object through which information passes into an individual. The field is affected by the preexisting, prior knowledge of the individual interpreting the information as much as it is by the information itself. In other words the field is something that can be changed by incoming information, depending on how it is interpreted. In the case of teaching in the classroom student fields of interpretation go into action when an assignment is given. Depending on the type of assignment, the field of interpretation can be very narrow or very broad. A student's field of interpretation may not get much of a workout if the assignment is to read a certain chapter, answer the questions at the end of the chapter, and turn them in by the end of the week before class. It is very likely that the intention of the instructor and the comprehension of the student operate on a one to one scale in this case. However, if the assignment is more vague, requiring the student to exercise more of his or her field of interpretation in his or her own way, one can begin to see how differently reality gets construed.

One assignment I have begun to use as part of the beginning of my classes is an introductory letter that students have to write to their fellow students. Usually the assignment

is only defined by the number of pages (a minimum of one page typed), letter format (Dear fellow students .../Sincerely, ...), and a due date. What goes between the "dear fellow students" and the "sincerely" is entirely up to the creativity and interpretation of the students. Some students interpret the assignment as requesting biographical information and basic statistics only; others choose to interpret it as chance to share their beliefs. Whatever comes out of the interpretation of my intentions -- basically to get the students to write a letter introducing them to each other -- is affected by the way in which the students comprehend the assignment. Sometimes students will be bothered by the vagueness of the assignment and question me about what I expect; they want me to narrow the vagueness down so they can find a more comfortable way of interpreting the assignment. They often fear misinterpreting the assignment, as they probably have done in situations that presented (as they interpreted it) a chance for them to say what they thought, only to discover they were "wrong" because they did not say what the teacher thought [was correct].

Interpretation is part of the foundation of reality construction. Intersubjectivity is the situation of reality; interpretation is the movement through reality. With these two ideas in mind the role of the pedagogue for the future of teaching should be significant. Not only do instructors need to realize that they command much of the intersubjective experience in terms of defining and explaining the reality of their courses for students, but what it means to *know* that they have that power. There is a significant difference between knowing that you have power and knowing what your power means for yourself and others. A pedagogue is an instructor who knows what it means to be "axiomatic," to be actively attempting to transform students, and to do so in an open and authentic way. Those instructors capable of utilizing their power wisely and thinking about it have within their teaching ability the means to develop learning contexts that optimize education for the most students. Even in courses at

the introductory level where certain amounts of information have to be transmitted in order to begin a discussion in those areas of study, the social act of teaching must be considered along with the practical act of getting the information to the students. The facts will not speak for themselves and self evident truth is a clever mask for deeply ingrained cultural ideologies. The "higher" in higher learning is the unveiling of learning as a social act that students must choose because it will improve their lives in some way. Perhaps in the current age of prescribed education, it has been forgotten that education is designed to make people feel better about their lives, more in control, more fully developed. The prescription and reification of education as part of the daily experience of a public as massive as America's makes it very easy to have the system be largely unresponsive to student wants and needs. It is the first sign of tyranny, no matter how mild and beneficent, when instructors claim to know what is best for students and move forward ignoring student feelings of confusion because the instructor feels the need to get through the material.

Not allowing students to enter the negotiation of the reality construction of the classroom leans more towards a form of psychological tyranny than practical necessity. There is a basic difference between assuming students can actively add to the construction of the class and assuming that the construction of the course should not concern them, only successful completion of the tasks. In the first situation, two pedagogical events can occur at the same time -- gaining the knowledge being transmitted through the class and gaining the awareness of how and why the knowledge is being transmitted. When following only the second situation, students can successfully complete the course but without ever feeling connected to the experience in a way that is authentic. The second situation encourages secret agents or role playing rather than transformation. I have found in my experience with young students that they believe in the ideals of the university education; they very much

want the university experience to improve them. They want to feel that they are participating in something that connects with their lives and interests them. But many, a majority I would suggest, come to the university skeptical and even cynical. And if events occur for them in ways that prevent them from connecting with the academic experience, they find their cynicism justified and will begin to think of college as something they did before they got work in the "real world." They do not need to encounter a system that takes little or no account of their concerns, wishes, or expectations.

Designing a curriculum, whether a comprehensive university program or a microcosmic individual class, out of the meta theoretical ideology of reality construction does not guarantee any particular type of success, but it does increase the possibility of success with the greatest number of students. And success within this ideological landscape is not measured by grade point averages or test scores, but by the amount of real learning that occurs for the students. Real learning is something which can be measured through assessments and portfolios, products more reflective of the organic nature of learning.[13] A reality construction theory "behind" pedagogy does the same thing as foundational theories attempt to do, transmit knowledge. However, when a pedagogue engages a student in a way that shows the student how their participation in the intersubjective experience of the class is crucial for the transformation of information into knowledge, s/he move the student out of a passive role into an active one. Unlike foundational theories, which limit the learning process to "getting it" or not, reality construction theories help the pedagogue to perform a double task -- transmitting the information and providing the student with the awareness to assess

[13] The evaluation tools of a pedagogy that comes out of reality construction theory must reflect the organic nature of learning that such a pedagogy encourages and creates. Assessment looks at development throughout a course rather than just the final products. It incorporates the process of learning as part of the grade. The portfolio has tremendous potential for keeping a record of the academic development of the student for the instructor and the instructors that follow, providing a more comprehensive view of student work than a transcript

and *interpret* that information as useful to him/her, presently or in the future. Learning under those conditions is likely to place the information in the student's "actual life" rather than in a compartment of their mind labeled "school stuff," which, like the recycle bin in a Windows program, gets emptied at the end of the course. What radical classes would exist if instructors of introductory level courses asked students what they wanted to make of the course in order to fit it into their real lives. The pedagogical magic is not in transforming the student who already has preexisting motivation in a class that teaches material in their major -- the biology major in the biology class or English major in the English class -- but rather in showing/finding out how the biology class benefits the English major and the English class benefits the biology major. Urging pedagogues to think about their teaching as participation in reality construction at the meta level or at the edge of reality construction frontiers is intended to give them the wherewithal to maximize their teaching to be both broad and deeply meaningful.

Transformation:

The Possibility of Pedagogy that Operates from a Reality Construction Perspective

If intersubjectivity is the situation of reality and interpretation is the movement through reality, then I hope to persuade instructors the intention of teaching, transformation, is best accomplished by understanding that reality is constructed. Educating is about transforming, whether that transformation is towards more knowledge, better knowledge, different knowledge, applicable knowledge, etc. And each of these transformations depends on the prior knowledge and experience with the material that the student brings to the classroom. Through the intersubjective experience of dialogue and writing, instructors and students exist in a space where transformation can potentially occur (at very high levels). Understanding the constructed nature of reality as a pedagogue and sharing that knowledge

with students increases the possibility of transformations to the highest degree. What transformations should occur really depends on the agenda of the instructor or the institution. The transformations that actually occur probably depend on the agenda and willingness of the students. I am not interested in any specific agendas (as final solutions for all situations), but the meta theory of transformation. Understanding the meta theory of transformation helps the pedagogue understand how transformation can occur in both negative and positive directions. This understanding is vital when a pedagogue has to engage a student whose starting position may be part of negative transformations (like racism or sexism). In chapter five I will explore specific attempts at transformations based on the agendas of the courses I taught, each one framed by the material and intention of the course. But to conclude here I want to think about transformation abstractly. The future of pedagogy will not be found in the specific examples of application. Specific application should always be viewed as a model for demonstrating sound theory, not as models for all applications. An application that is successful or fails does so because it is context dependent and the context demands certain choices. Meta theory is the universal translator, the worldwide passport, the super vaccine, the no limit credit card, the unlimited possibilities. Theories are the bridges between the two worlds and they can be assessed on the merits of how well constructed they are to suit certain applications. As much as theory predicts, anticipates or guides application, application determines the usefulness, success and modifications of theory. Many theories in application today in education are a bit like the plank and rope bridges of jungles. They work, but they also betray the weakness and limits between form and function. When a society is trying to cross a mass public from one side of knowledge to another, the bridge has to be wide and sturdy and flexible. As students move through the ranks of college into greater specialization, application and theory narrow to suit specialization. But at the

beginning and introductory level, foundational theories that claim a certain canon are building the narrow bridge too soon.

This is not to say that an introductory course in writing, narrative, critical thinking, British Literature, poetry, etc. will not have specific texts to demonstrate the theories or the genres. But instructors need to be ever mindful that students understand that the canon and the theory behind the canon are not identical. A good course in narrative can be taught using either science fiction novels from the local bookstore or tried and true novel writers from any era. In fact, a good introductory narrative class would demonstrate narrative in video games, comic books, television, movies, radio, advertising, magazines, conversation, dress, etc. -- as well as books. Students should be taught specific texts or ideas so that they may become more flexible when encountering a new academic situation. This especially true when considering the teaching of courses that involve a high degree of social learning along side expertise in a study of knowledge -- like composition, critical thinking, narrative, history, sociology, psychology, and anthropology courses.

CHAPTER 4

Cooking With Theories: Ingredients for Transforming Classrooms

What Every Kitchen Should Have

I first ran across cooking as a metaphor for teaching when I read Peter Elbow's Embracing Contraries. "Growing is the overall larger process, the evolution of whole organisms. Cooking is the smaller process: bubbling, percolating, fermenting, chemical interaction, atomic fission" (40). As Elbow continues to explore his own metaphor and extend its range, he says, "Cooking is the interaction of contrasting or conflicting material. I try in what follows to specify various *kinds* of interaction that are important in writing. But in any of them cooking consists of the process of one piece of material (or one process) being transformed by interacting with another: ..." (40). I found this a profound metaphor for talking about not only writing, but pedagogy. The cooking I am doing in this book involves the cooking of various theories to create a meal for my pedagogical audience. The theories represent ingredients, which sit on the shelves of my office to be used in various recipes when I cook something up for my classes. To make a successful meal for a guest, one has to be able to find the right ingredients, put them together just so, and serve them with proper hospitality to make the meal "successful." And often each meal is different, though every chef (pedagogue) has his/her own style.

I have stocked my own kitchen with a number of ingredients, some I use repeatedly and some I rarely, if ever, use. And some eventually got thrown out because I could not find much of a use for them (these would be my texts on deconstruction). Some ingredients work

well together and some do not. In the end though, teaching is like cooking because it is experimental. I am not talking about making a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, though I suspect some people who teach cook this way. I am not talking about fast food like McDonalds, though much of education cooks like fast food joints, the same process over and over again. Heaven forbid a customer should ask for any deviation in the way something is prepared, like when a student asks "why?" The whole idea behind fast food education for the student is to take it just the way it is served. Making a special request in a fast food environment is like asking someone to change the square hole to fit a round peg. It can be done, but it is slows things down and can be a real pain to the people behind you and the service person in front of you. No, no what I am talking about is a gourmet restaurant metaphor of cooking with regard to teaching (especially composition, critical thinking, and narrative), one in which the kitchen has the ingredients to prepare meals that suit the different tastes of the customers. Now, granted the customers have to be willing to work within the style of restaurant; one would not expect a customer at an Italian restaurant to ask for gravy and biscuits any more than a student would expect a history course to teach chemistry. However, within the paradigm of the restaurant and the course, the chef/instructor should have ingredients to make the food appropriate to the palate of his/her consumer.

What every pedagogical chef really needs in his or her kitchen is room for all the various ingredients that may be called upon to prepare dishes for the customers that come into his/her restaurant for a semester. S/he needs to have a good sense of his/her own cooking style and the ability to explain the dishes s/he prepares. What would count as pedagogical appetizers, main courses, and desserts and would best suit the courses as they get served. The cooking metaphor fits well when it comes to talking concurrently about pedagogy. Both cooking and teaching rely on the dialectical relationship of the consumer.

his/her tastes and the expertise of the chef (instructor) to meet those tastes with his/her own sense of flair. Of course, as I have been speaking about the difference between a teacher and a pedagogue, I would extend that metaphorical difference to "chef" versus "cook" in a cooking metaphor. Chefs and cooks mainly differ in degrees of training, expertise, artistry, and expectations. The basic element in differentiating a chef from a cook is an idea I would phrase as "successful creativity and artistry with food," which could include professionals and non-professionals alike. However, (in keeping with the restaurant metaphor) chefs usually receive specialized training from a culinary school; a cook is usually a tradesperson who learns on the job. Chefs are expected to be able to adapt to special requests and create new dishes; a cook is someone who efficiently reproduces the same meals at the same level of quality over and over again. And finally, most any chef could do a cook's job, but few cooks could as easily replace a chef. I would like to show in this chapter how I combined ingredients (individual theories) into recipes (theoretical mixtures) to make the dishes that would actually be served in the Transforming Classrooms I created when teaching critical thinking and narrative. The cooking process, from meta-theory (that moment when I open the door of my cabinet and refrigerator, consider who I'm having for lunch or dinner, and think about a menu that will accommodate all the guests) into classroom practice (the syllabus/menu), requires varying degrees of theoretical development, often a back and forth from one level to the next experimenting towards practice, and a back and forth between theory and practice to help refine a dish.

The back and forth quality can be seen in the syllabi of past classes. At the beginning of my teaching I certainly had many more dishes that turned out wrong than I did ones that turned out right. And each semester, the next group of students that came into my classroom got a better menu and better meal. I discovered that an appetizer of introductions,

in which all students took the time and effort to learn each others names, was the perfect beginning to setting up a community for open discussion. Other appetizers included sharing my background as a pedagogue with the students to inform them of the positions that I support, that I was certain type of Marxist, feminist, chaos theorist. Additionally, I would start them out with a course description and the agenda of the course, what would be expected of them and me. I presented them with Peter Elbow's concept of methodological belief. Like a fine dining experience, it takes some time to present and digest these appetizers, but they have proven to be the perfect starters for the meal I serve over the semester. One can always tell when food has been politely, but ill received: the plate comes back with much of the food still on it. But that is also how one learns what to serve and when.

Chapter three was written to explore the meta theory behind, beneath, around, through, all theories and theorists discussed in chapter two. This chapter will continue and complete the theoretical movement towards the final chapter, which will look at actual classroom practice. It is important to keep in mind that none of the theoretical development occurs in a linear fashion. Ann Berthoff is most right in The Making of Meaning when she says, "But writing can't teach writing unless it is understood as a nonlinear, dialectical process in which the writer continually circles back, reviewing and rewriting: ..." (3). This idea holds equally true for the pedagogue. Part of the recircling process for me has been the construction of some rather general "meta collection sites" for theories that come from different writers and fields, but that share a common concept. These general conceptual categories are convenient filters for the broad/deep concept of constructed reality and how it moves through pedagogy into actual classroom practice. Not only that, but the classroom practice moves back through the filter to affect the understanding of constructed reality. In

some ways, theory and practice represent equal forces locked together in a constant struggle for growth. The categories I want to explore in this chapter will attempt to unveil the growth and the best ways to achieve growth in the university classroom.

Degrees of Difference

Degrees of difference and differences that make a difference are two of the many faces of the conceptual totality of difference/similarity. Like all binaries there really exists a third aspect of the relationship and that is the dialectic itself, the / (slash mark), the symbol that both separates and connects the two ideas. My experience as a pedagogue has been one that consistently shows me that much of the struggle of critical thinking is against simplification, reduction, and reification. These are the thinking moves that eliminate the degrees of difference that count in arguments, reaching understanding, and developing open-mindedness. Degrees of difference and difference that makes a difference is where almost all the subtlety and complexity in life exists. And it can be quite the task to move a thinker from a zone of development that cannot see or refuses to see degrees of difference to a zone that sees the crucial subtleties in the variations of similarity. A cook and a chef both, similarly, prepare food, but with considerable degrees of difference. As humans move from less complex stages of psychological development to more complex ones, they do so by differentiating ideas, categories, and things. As Bruner puts it, "In time, and with sufficient exposure to cues and models, children, in fact, do usually 'shape up.' But the shaping in question is usually not a matter of some prepared emotion, but consists, rather, of helping the child to contextualize initially undifferentiated feelings into highly differentiated social situations that give these feelings their affective signature" (116). In other words, a child being denied something gets upset because there is no differentiation between wanting things

that are good and healthful and wanting things that are bad and harmful: there is just the wanting. As the child experiences and learns that some things s/he desires could, in fact, harm him or her, s/he will begin a process by which desire becomes differentiated into many categories -- some good and some not so good and some decidedly wrong. The child will begin to recognize degrees of difference.

This process of development is not the region solely of children: adults have to navigate degrees of difference as well, and instructors in education have to be even more conscious of it when thinking about their thinking about teaching. As Friere puts it, "This task [of humanists to teach] implies that revolutionary leaders do not go to the people in order to bring them a message of 'salvation,' but in order to come to know through dialogue with them both their *objective situation* and their *awareness* of that situation -- the various levels of perception of themselves and of the world in which they exist" (76). The objective situation of many of the students I have taught involves thirty to forty hour work schedules, parenthood, athletic responsibilities, financial aid and so on. Each of these and sometimes a combination of these create degrees of difference with regard to the learning situation my students participate in. I can ignore that situation or I can take it into account when it comes to designing my courses. Either way, it exists for the student and does affect their ability to learn.

Like Vygotsky, who proposed the zones of proximal development, Friere recognizes differentiation in meta theoretical terms as well. He points out:

> Because -- in contrast to animals -- people can tri-dimensionalize time into the past, the present, and the future, their history, in function of their own creations, develops as a constant process of transformation within which epochal units materialize [zones]. These epochal units are not closed periods of time, static compartments within which people are confined. Were this the case, a fundamental condition of history -- its continuity -- would disappear. On the contrary epochal units interrelate in the dynamics of historical continuity (82).

The way Friere explains the developing "historical position" of humans exactly mirrors the way Vygotsky explains children learning through zones of proximal development. Additionally, the development process often occurs in different degrees depending on the ability of the child to move from lower zones of learning/knowledge to higher zones as s/he moves forward through time. Further complexity in the degrees of difference unfolds when considering time (past, present, future) as a factor occurring around and outside and through a person. Once again, while developmental stages do not occur in direct linear fashion (Vygotsky); they *best* occur at certain times. The child who reaches adulthood without ever developing healthy "other" orientation, a zone of cognitive development that follows egocentric development, will likely be unable to view him/herself as part of a larger community and potentially responsible for and to its other members. For Friere this has lead to three rather distinct ways of participating in the world; "for the dominant elites, organization means organizing themselves. For the revolutionary leaders, organization means organizing themselves with the people. In the first event, the dominant elite increasingly structures its power so that it can more efficiently dominate and depersonalize; in the second, organizations only corresponds to its nature and objective if in itself it constitutes the practice of freedom" (158). Of course the depersonalized and dominated comprise the third group. This claim by Friere reflects a degree of difference point made by Douglas Rushkoff -- the difference between a virus that carries a meme and a virus that carries and is a meme. Many an oppressive teaching technique has been used to teach the concept of freedom, but "true" teaching achieves freedom both in technique and meaning.

Perhaps Vygotsky gets at the heart of the concept of degrees of difference because his work occurs in the study of psychology, where the meaning of degrees of difference is

most significant. In a passage where he is discussing how degrees of difference get compressed, he unsecrets one of the common problems that happens when very different things get compared on apparent levels of similarity rather than in holistic ways which show the differences. He demonstrates his point when discussing reactions:

> Another perspective on this issue [which appears similar at a surface level, but are quite different when explored with depth] can be gained from comparing complex reactions with reflexes, which are psychologically different in many respects. One point of comparison will suffice for purpose of illustration. It is well known that the latent period of a complex reaction is longer than the latent period for a reflex. But Wundt long ago established that the latent period of a complex reaction decreases with practice. As a result, the latency of the complex reaction and the simple reflex become equivalent. The most important differences between complex reaction and reflex are usually most apparent when the reaction is in its early stages; as practice proceeds, the differences become more and more obscured. Therefore, the differences between these two forms of behavior should be sought in the analysis of their development (MIS 68).

Even in his illustration, Vygotsky is theoretical. In a more concrete way one need only spend a few days in a video arcade or playing games on one of the new games systems (Super Nintendo, Sega Saturn, Sony Playstation) to truly understand how a complex reaction can be mistaken for simple reflexes. Most video games, especially the fighting games, have complex moves that require the player to master them for split second application, especially as the player moves up to faster, harder levels of play. A novice player may be able to win on reflex alone at the basic levels, but as the games increase in speed and difficulty the player must master complex button combinations to deliver special blows in order to beat the game. If you did not observe the development of the highly skilled player and s/he was placed side by side with a novice playing at the beginning level; their reaction times would appear the same. But if the novice were to attempt to play at the higher level without having mastered the complex reactions, s/he would be easily beaten by the game.

This example and its metaphorical implications are rather intentional because writing operates in much the same way, especially writing within a system like the university classroom. It often happens that the instructors put the game on one level of play and everyone in the class may or may not have the complex reactions practiced to a degree that will allow them to master that level of development. Some will have those skills and beyond; they will find the game boring. Pedagogues have to be sensitive to degrees of difference in order to accomplish the goal of teaching at optimum levels. Here again Vygotsky unsecrets the reason, which explains why pedagogues are so important in societies:

> *The nature of development itself changes*, from biological to sociohistorical. Verbal thought is not an innate, natural form of behavior, but is determined by a historical-cultural process and has specific properties and laws that cannot be found in natural forms of thought and speech. Once we acknowledge the historical character of verbal thought, we must consider it subject to all the premises of historical materialism, which are valid for any historical phenomenon in human society. It is only to be expected that on this level the development of behavior will be governed essentially by the general laws of the historical development of human society (T&L 94-95).

Herein lies the origin of the concept of degrees of difference. If all that is human society is or has been constructed historically, then the degrees of difference that make up that (those) construction(s) is(are) critical to human thought. Every institution, way of life, lifestyle, religion, philosophy, or common sense notion can be studied and deconstructed or reconstructed by people. In the classroom this is the power of naming and the thread that connects theorists like Berthoff, Friere, Rosenblatt, Shirley Heath, Iser, Ricoeur, Marx, Engels, Eagleton, Vygotsky, Smith, Elbow and any one else that understands that language is not only a form of empowerment, but the very thing that contributes to the construction of reality by attempting to name, make laws, and define.

This means something fundamental for a theory of pedagogy because, conceptually speaking, the instructor is the one person in the classroom who is supposed to be capable of

seeing the most degrees of difference (in students and material), assess which differences should make a difference when constructing and developing a class, and be able to react appropriately to dynamic situations that involve degrees of difference. Pedagogues have to realize that they operate in what Vygotsky refers to as a "complex" or a complex system. "In a complex, there is no hierarchical organization of the relations between different traits of an object. All attributes are functionally equal. There is a profound difference in what concerns the relations of the parts to the whole, and of one part to another, as the relations appear in complexes and in concepts." (T&L 133). Perhaps one way to think of it is that a TV is composed of many parts that make it a complex piece of machinery. If one of the parts fails, the TV will not work properly. It does not matter which part fails if it renders the TV inoperable, but it does matter how much the part that breaks costs (a concept of value). Like the joke goes, a 300 dollar picture tube will blow up to protect a 10 cent fuse.

When this concept gets applied to a classroom complex, the degree of difference that would probably suit the TV metaphor is the difference between the first silent picture movie projectors and a modern recording studio. When teaching a group of students students numerous "pieces" have to be interconnected to make make the classroom work successfully. The key word in the above quote from Vygotsky can be found in the sentence where he says that "all attributes are functionally equal:" that word would be 'functionally.' The most difficult, complete understanding for the pedagogue to reach is the one in which the instructor recognizes all the attributes needed to make teaching successful. Unlike the TV that has a nice schematic of all the components that make it function, instructing always begins with a partial framework. The rest develops as the class develops. The unique skill of the Freirian revolutionary leader is his or her ability to find the best, functional way to teach

while utilizing and being aware of all the theories and practices needed to accomplish his/her task in a particular teaching context.

Writers all across the landscape of thought recognize and understand the very crucial and critical nature degrees of difference brings to the human endeavor of thinking and understanding. The pedagogue must harness this concept to help students come to better grips with their consciousness and their search for knowledge and understanding about the material they are being taught. Degrees of difference is the very reason "objectivity," in the grand cosmic sense, is a myth. It is the reason that the statement, "let's be objective" means "let's treat this idea, thing, person as an object" and *not* "let's tap into the objective truth of the universe to make the *one and only* correct decision." There is a difference between proper method and the reason the method is being applied. It is an act of mind to make the distinction between form and meaning, and a further act of mind to believe one superior to the other.

In university education this attitude has lead to the idea that any form will do so long as the goal is reached, even if getting the material taught means boring students, ignoring cultural shifts in the information most needed by a student body, and failing to provide new instructors with proper training. Stephen Toulmin clarifies the problem in the form and meaning split by emphasizing that the two exist in a holistic relationship. In the chapter "The Layout of Argument" in his book The Uses of Argument the states that, "when we set out a piece of applied mathematics, in which some system of mathematical relations is used to throw light on a question of (say) physics, the correctness of the calculations will be one thing, their appropriateness to the problem in hand may be quite another" (102). This very idea undergirds his thoughts in the following chapter "Working Logic and Idealized Logic," in which he makes the argument that working logic must account for meaning and not just

form. The limit of pure logic is that it can be "right" in form, but inappropriate or unclear in meaning.

Consider the classic "Socrates" syllogism used to demonstrate logic in probably almost every beginning philosophy course in college:

Socrates is a man
–
All men are mortal
=
Socrates is mortal.

If all of human language were so direct and terse, logic would be the solution to all our confusion, or so it seems. But all it takes is digging into a few of the words of the syllogism to put idealized logic of this sort into a maelstrom of controversy. While some people might actually agree with this syllogism, some might not. People can agree or disagree *because* the words present in the syllogism require interpretation. A person might argue over what is meant by mortal; does the word refers to mere physicality or to spiritual essence? Once the term mortal is put into question, then the term men can be reinterpreted. Depending on one's belief system all men may actually be immortal if the meaning of men include their souls. For this reason Toulmin argues that "... the conclusions of substantial arguments -- however well established and securely based the warrants [the ideas of men and mortality] relied in reaching them -- can never be more than highly probable" (138). Working logic, real life everyday thinking, always includes at least one premise left to chance.

Why is everything probable to some degree where language is concerned? Language is a partial system and not a direct manifestation of reality. When I describe an idea or object, it is not the same thing as doing the idea or holding the object. There is a Zen saying that claims that the moment one attempts to describe an object is the moment when one misses the point. Or as Frank Smith puts it in his book Understanding Reading, "when we try

to say what words mean, all we can do is offer other words (a synonym or a paraphrase) that reflect the same meaning" (26). To complicate matters even more, the "direct apprehension of reality" is shrouded in cultural language and interpretation as well, depending on the context of the experience. In other words, there is no universal understanding that does not pass through the filter of interpretation, which is affected by degrees of difference. It is the subtle and not so subtle shades of difference that enrich a common idea, but that never allow a common idea to push all people in the same direction; just consider the human inability to achieve peace. The reason all people do not share the same perception/interpretation of language, ideas, and experiences is that people comprehend differently based on their theories-of-the-world and their standpoints. Thus, "... comprehension is more appropriately a state, the opposite of confusion. ... comprehension is the possibility of relating whatever we are attending to in the world around us to the knowledge, intentions, and expectations we already have in our heads" (Smith 53).

To understand this point is to understand why degrees of difference is such a vital aspect of pedagogy. Every student in the classroom is taking whatever material is presented and "attending to [it through] the knowledge, intentions, and expectations [they] already have in [their] heads."[1] Like Berthoff, Smith believes that students actively seek to comprehend material to reduce their confusion. Afterall, confusion is an uncomfortable state. But equally, the state of confusion (or in Berthoff's rhetoric, chaos) is the arena in which students struggle in ways that increase their ability to comprehend more and greater complexity. If that zone (Vygotsky) of chaos is not too far away from their last known zone of comprehension, they should be able to make growth towards a higher zone of

[1] In the next section of this chapter I will be exploring how pedagogues send the material of their classes out through "the knowledge, intentions, and expectations" they have in their heads through their *agendas*.

comprehension. To help better frame this idea Smith provides some thoughtful ideas about the *state* of comprehension:

> ... the informativeness of facts depends on the prior knowledge of the person receiving them. "Paris is the capital of France" is a fact, but it is not informative to Tom who knows it already, nor to Dick who does not understand what the word "capital" means. ... Information exists only when it reduces uncertainty, which is relative to the knowledge and purposes of the individual receiving it. ... Comprehension does not entail assimilating or even examining all of the information in a text, but rather being able to make some sense of the text in terms of the reader's expectations and intentions. ... I may not comprehend a particular text in the same way as you, but then I may not be asking the same questions. ... The teacher's questions may be noise to the child. (55)

Ultimately, an understanding of degrees of difference is the very way in which pedagogues can avoid throwing noise at a student. Teaching is the constant negotiation against student reactions of boredom and confusion. If students come into the classroom with an honest desire to learn, then instructors have to be sensitive to the degrees of difference that make up that classroom as well as be responsible to the job they perform in transmitting and developing certain ideas, information, and abilities.

On the inverse side of things, though, "human beings owe their preeminent position in the intellectual hierarchy of living organisms not so much to their ability to perceive the world in many different ways as to their capacity to perceive things as the same according to criteria that they establish themselves, selectively ignoring what might be termed *differences that make a difference*" (Smith 103). While this may certainly be true, the question of evaluation emerges around determining which differences make a difference and which ones do not. Should it make a difference in the way a student is taught if s/he is working forty hours a week and attending school, if a student is getting a "free ride" financially, if a student is raising a child, if s/he is a graduate from a high school that had the latest technologies to aid in teaching, or if s/he comes from a school with textbooks years out of date. Or maybe

the more direct question begins with does it make a difference? If so or if not, the instructor will still have to determine what student experiences and situations will count when it comes to teaching his or her course. S/he has to determine what his/her agenda for teaching will be.

The concept of "degrees of difference" is one of those meta idea threads that runs through all of the thinkers who write in the most complex ways about their fields of study. In an attempt to pull the thread out and up into view, I will very quickly frame and list several quotes that demonstrate thinking about degrees of difference. Quantity and breadth is nearly as important as depth (in presenting these quotes) because they help show how this meta idea exists throughout many different areas of thinking.

In reading theory:

> This process of learning to establish categories involves hypothesizing what are the significant differences -- the only reason to establish a new category is to make a new differentiation in our experience, and the learning problem is to find the significant differences that should define the category. (Smith 186)

> Such a referential model, with all its normative definitions, reveals its obvious commitment to a certain historical conception of art, thus betraying its inherent historicity. The moment a work of art needs to be examined in terms of its individuality or its functions, the referential model must be replaced by an operational one. This is more appropriate anyway in the study of modern art, but it also enables us to gain access to works of the past by laying bare their functions and the conditions governing their reception. It goes without saying that all modes of interpretation have their limitations. The borders of classical norms became evident when their claim to universal validity was tested against the challenge of modern art. It suddenly became apparent that the classical aesthetics of contemplation no longer found anything to contemplate, thought this 'exhaustion' had not exhausted the function of art. (Iser, footnote 29, 14)

> Their very elusiveness forces the observer to try and pin them down, but the tendency when he does so is to confuse the quality of his definition with the nature of the text, whereas the nature of the text is to induce these acts of definition without ever being identical to their results. (Iser 26)

> Different meanings of the same text have emerged at different times, and, indeed, the same text read a second time will have a different effect from that of its first reading. (Iser 29)

Making "new differentiations in our experience" is as much something that happens to a person as something they do. People differentiate others by the way they look, especially if the other is from a significantly different ethnic group. Differentiation can also occur internally for a person as Iser suggests in the last sentence. Consider how different it is to read a book at fifteen and again at twenty-five and then again at fifty, especially if that book is a comic book, The Scarlet Letter, or Men Are From Mars and Women Are From Venus. In his second statement Iser unlocks a key difference between the idea of apprehension and the idea of interpretation. Too often it is easy to confuse interpretation with apprehension. A text, by its very *design*, cannot speak for itself, cannot correct (mis)interpretation. At best, a text might lead to some interpretations more than others, maybe even to a high percentage of similar interpretations, but it is hardly immune to all variant interpretations. I may know what a text means to me, but what I apprehend is not the text, but *what it means to me*[2], that much I may be sure of, at least until another competing interpretation is introduced to me that could change my mind.

In Pedagogy and Writing Theory:

> The surest way to get hold of what your present frame blinds you to is to try to adopt the opposite frame, that is, to reverse your model. A person who can live with contradiction and exploit it -- who can use conflicting models -- can simply see and think *more*. (Elbow 241)
>
> At one point in the developmental or historical process, a phenomenon might mean one thing; at another it might mean something entirely different. Without the time dimension, the explanation is meaningless. (Elbow 249)

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[2] Think of the phrase *what it means to me* as an object that I can touch and apprehend through my psychological senses. I can't really think of a good reason to argue that the way a text made me feel was actually not the way a text made me feel, which is not the same thing as getting the plot wrong. If I was erroneous about some element of the plot, that could change the way I feel about the text, but that would not change the way I felt earlier, that feeling already happened.

> An individual cannot be totally divorced from social collectives any more than a social collective can be totally separated from individuals. Nevertheless, such divisions on this continuum are useful ways of showing differing degrees of emphasis in theories or teaching practices. (LeFevre 51)

Elbow gets at two different ways that degrees of difference can be affected. The first is by conscious effort on the part of a thinker. As he points out, the person who sees two sides to an issue sees *more* than the person who only sees one. If the thinking criteria is based on how many sides one can see regarding an issue then the person who sees two sides to an issue thinks *more* than the person that only sees one. Seeing more sides to an issue does not mean that a person will not choose a side to defend or promote, but it does mean that the person will likely be able to dialogue with people on other sides of the issue. The person who only sees one side usually ends up talking only to those people already in agreement with him/her or talking *at* the people in disagreement with him/her. It is rather difficult to progress thinking with regard to an issue when the talking occurs *at someone* rather than *with someone*. The second way degrees of difference gets affected is by a difference of context; in this case, historical context. Consider the play Hamlet as a "phenomenon" that first happened when Shakespeare wrote it in 1600 and what it meant to audiences at that time. Then consider the same play, performed on the *movie* screen with Mel Gibson as Hamlet, in 1994 and what it means. The difference is considerable. LeFevre statement shows that she believes pedagogy has ways to differentiate good and bad theory. She suggests that, though artificial, conscious divisions of social and individual should be used to help in further developing and understanding the dialectic between the two.

In Anthropological Theory:

> Clearly, the matter is one of degree, not polar opposition -- "fear" is experience-nearer than "phobia," and "phobia" experience-nearer than "ego dysyntonic." And the difference is not, at least so far as anthropology is concerned (the matter is otherwise in poetry and physics), a normative one, in the sense that one sort of concept is to be preferred as such over the other. Confinement to experience-near concepts leaves an ethnographer awash in immediacies, as well as entangled in vernacular. Confinement to experience-distant ones leaves him stranded in abstractions and smothered in jargon. The real question, and the one Malinowski raised by demonstrating that, in the case of "natives," you don't have to be one to know one, is what roles the two sorts of concepts play in anthropological analysis. (Geertz 57)

> But whether one wants to shout "*vive la difference!*" or "*a bas la difference!*," the sheer existence of *la difference* is not subject to much discussion. The view of the legendary little girl -- that people come in two kinds, plain and fancy -- may have been lamentably unliberated; but that she noticed something anatomically real seems apparent enough. (Geertz 81)

> The unity of form and content is, where it occurs and to the degree it occurs, a cultural achievement, not a philosophical tautology (Geertz 102)

Anthropological and sociological research have probably done the most to establish reality construction as one of the better explanatory models for human development. In a way Geertz undermines oppositions by suggesting that apparently polar oppositions really represent extreme degrees of difference over some underlying concept. Hence good and evil are not really oppositions, but two degrees of response regarding the issue of moral choice. Like *difference*, moral choice is not subject to much discussion, but the way in which moral choices are made *is* usually the subject of much discussion. Finally, form and content are always already connected, but the degree to which that connection is recognized or disregarded is a "cultural achievement."

In one of those rare years in North Carolina's usually mild winters there was an ice storm. It effectively shut down Greensboro. On the day that the ice was the worst, I had a video tape that was due back to its store. I was not about to risk my life or my car to return

the video and I trusted that the store's personnel would understand and not charge me a late fee. The next day, after the ice had melted considerably I ventured out to return my video. When I got to the store I told the young person at the counter that I expected not to be charged a late fee for the video. She responded by informing me that the store had been open and so all late fees were due. I tried to explain that the openness of the store had nothing to do with the ice in my parking lot and that it was the ice in my parking lot that kept the video from coming back. She was unfazed by this content argument, very secure in her form position (meaning she knew the policy of the store and was not about to let any other meanings affect it). So I decided to try a different tact. The late fee was going to cost me $3.15. I told the person that if they charged me that late fee I would take my business to a store that would understand the difference between natural disaster and negligence. My business was considerable; my wife and I spent somewhere around $50.00 a month on videos. I tried to explain that for $3.15 the store would be losing my overall business. The person behind the counter remained unfazed, comfortably clinging to the form of the policy. My last act would have been the one that most people use when faced with a form over content problem, to ask for the manager. The manager is the person who reveals the cultural achievement, and not the tautology, of form/content relationships. Actually, I was already steamed at the management because it failed to teach its employees how to make a reasonable judgment when a situation called for it, or even better, to have the clerk think to call management when confronted with my type of situation. So, I took my business elsewhere.

In Legal Theory:

> Suppressed entirely in the piously evenhanded treatment of the Klan and the boycotters -- the studied inability to tell the difference between oppressor and oppressed that passes for principled neutrality in this area as well as others -- was the fact that the Klan was promoting inequality and the civil

> rights leaders were resisting it, in a country that is supposedly not constitutionally neutral on the subject. (MacKinnon 86)
>
> Women's reactions to the presentation of other women being sexually abused in pornography, and the reactions of Jews living in Skokie to having Nazis march through their town, are routinely trivialized in the United States as "being offended." The position of those with less power is equated with the position of those with more power, as if sexual epithets against straight white men were more equivalent to sexual epithets against women, as if breaking the window of a Jewish-owned business in the world after Kristallnacht were just so much breaking glass. (MacKinnon 105)

MacKinnon shows how degrees of difference affect the world in the most profound ways. While clan members and boycotters may be engaged in the same activity, protesting, they are not engaged in it for the same reasons or with the same meaning. The difference in meaning is decidedly important when considering what the value and importance of what is being protested should be and how that meaning should be treated. The only thing similar in advocating racism or equality by marching publicly is the marching, but a similarity in form should not be confused with equal meaning of ideas.

In Communication Social Theory:

> Perhaps the most important lesson we can draw from anthropological studies is that cultures profoundly shape gender identity. Amazingly few gender differences have been found across a range of societies, and the ones that have been documented tend to be very small (Adler, 1991). For instance, both boys and girls in most cultures show tendencies to nurture and to be aggressive. What usually differs is the extent to which these qualities are encourage in each gender by particular cultures. (Wood 47)
>
> As we take cultural scripts for gender inside of ourselves, we learn not only that there are different roles for men and women but also that unequal values are assigned to them. That can be very frustrating for those who are encouraged to conform to a role that will not be esteemed. (Wood 51)

Wood continues to hammer home the idea that realities are constructed. Her work explores the constructed nature of gender roles and how those roles are valued. Beliefs about gender

are more than mere opinions: they shape education practices, business practices, political policy, and economic industries. Rather than developing attributes common to men and women (intellect, business acumen, political involvement, etc.), our culture and many others have consistently given favor to one gender (men) over another (women) through unfair abuse of power. As much of feminist theory effectively points out, these prescriptions are cultural and constructed, thus they can be changed in directions towards greater equality and fairness.

In Rhetorical Theory:

> Effects from more or less similar happenings in the past would come in to give our response its character and this as far as it went would be meaning. Meaning of a lowly kind, no doubt, the kind of meaning that the least developed animals live by. ... A perception is never just an *it;* perception takes whatever it perceives as a thing of a certain sort. All thinking from the lowest to the highest -- whatever else it may be -- is sorting. (Richards 30)

> Its own peculiar problems are local [*Geertz*], perhaps temporary and unimportant -- but if we pursue them we find that they lead us to the problems of the choice of words, and further still that they bring into view most of the problems of aesthetics. To realize that it is idle to ask of a word, "Is it beautiful?" -- unless we are ready to ask thoroughly, "What will it do in its varied incidences?" -- is a first step and a long step in the aesthetics of language. A parallel step must be made for every branch of aesthetics. A discussion of the reasons for the choice of words -- which too often seems a trivial exchange of whimsies -- can become an introduction to the theory of all choices. The art of so transforming it from a tea-table topic into the central discipline of education waits to be rediscovered, but the better we understand what place words hold in our lives the readier we shall be to admit that to think about their choice is the most convenient mode of thinking about the principle of all our choices. (Richards 86)

> One assumption is that 'an eye for resemblances' is a gift that some men have but others have not. But we all live, and speak, only through our eye for resemblances. Without it we should perish early. Though some may have better eyes than others, the differences between them are in degrees only and may be remedied, certainly in some measure, as other differences are, by the right kinds of teaching and study. (Richards 90)

"All thinking is sorting," or as Japhet Asher put it in Rushkoff's book, "Editing is a great function of life" (150). All sorting occurs in degrees. Some things are sorted higher, some lower, some equally. What is clearly evident is that all things are *not* sorted equally. Degrees of love, degrees of loyalty, degrees of happiness, degrees of difference. Richards sums up a key meta idea at the end of the last sentence: degrees of understanding, and most importantly lack of understanding, can be *remedied* "by the right kinds of teaching and study." Enter the pedagogue with pedagogical theory for his/her practice. The difficult concept to isolate is what exactly will count for "right teaching" in various contexts. The variations of context readily require the pedagogue to have a theory of teaching that is highly adaptive and quickly responsive.

Agendas and Pedagogy:

> "Dialogue does not impose, does not manipulate, does not domesticate, does not 'sloganize.' This does not mean, however, that the theory of dialogical action leads nowhere; nor does it mean that the dialogical human does not have a clear idea of what she wants, or of the objectives to which she is committed."
>
> Paulo Friere Pedagogy of the Oppressed p. 149

Teaching is about having agendas and carrying them out. Obviously the most common agenda is to get through whatever material is supposed to make up the course. This rather mundane agenda has created an odd attitude about teaching; one that sees the role of teachers as somehow neutral and devoid of opinions on the subjects they teach. If instruction could so easily be reduced to just passing information along, there really would be no need for instructors. With our modern computer age, students could just plug into a computer system, read the material and, if they had any questions, simply access the FAQ's page (Frequently Asked Questions). Teachers could become a thing of the past; all that would be needed would be data entry people with knowledge in each area of expertise to update the

system and answer new FAQ's. But then again such a system would not involve the process of teaching. Teaching is dialogue and the classrooms without dialogue are failing to access the most vital spirit of pedagogy, the very real and authentic progress that comes through "dialogical action."

The transforming classroom theory I am trying to articulate represents my focused agenda in this work. Part of that agenda is explicit discussion about what I am doing and how I am going about it. Many agendas run concurrent in my teaching. Some important ones are probably the least straightforward or obvious because they have been implicitly incorporated into my teaching. Certainly, many of the agendas I have revolve around teaching certain material within certain contexts, narrative in the narrative class and beginning writing in the composition class. But other agendas weigh heavily in the overall pedagogy that I envision: developing community, gaining respect, encouraging interest, finding ways to make learning comfortable rather than forced, opening up the class to real/authentic dialogue, and helping students begin self-reflective/self-aware/self actualizing thinking. I am constantly looking for ways to turn learning over to the students, to put myself in a role where I am a helpful guide as they explore material on their own. Perhaps the most difficult balance to strike in teaching/learning in prescribed education is between freedom and force, difficult contraries to embrace. The agendas I apply in my classes strive to find the greatest amount of freedom while at the same time accomplishing the prescribed agendas of the courses and university.

Another part of "agenda theory" that sometimes needs arguing is the idea that every course and every text is laden with agendas. Some of these agendas fall under the guise of harmless transmission of information and others are aggressive attempts to persuade an audience into one type of thinking or another. One agenda that classical rhetoricians appear

most clear about, and the one agenda that still finds an active environment for its many methods, is persuasion. However, instruction in many places, high school and college, has lost its creative fire because it has taken for granted the need to persuade and supplanted it with a system of forced learning that is no longer responsive to the audience in any active way. When Aristotle or Demosthenes or Pericles stood before the crowd to present policy or argue ideas, they did not have the luxury of prescribed audience members. It is this prescribed audience member that has changed the face of rhetoric in teaching and learning situations. And to some degree, the system has evolved to perpetuate a type of work that does not best reflect pedagogy in its most authentic meaning. Consider how different the approach to teaching would be if students really had the option to walk out of a class, with their money, if they judged that the instructor was not addressing their concerns for learning with regard to the subject matter taught. To disregard this apparently extreme idea because it would be hard to see how students could judge the expertise of the teacher would miss the point entirely. The students would be judging the teacher's ability to teach, to get them to listen to his/her expertise. Accountability is missing from much of teaching and sorely hurting the profession at one and the same time. Direct accountability would demand that instructors stay alert and adaptable to the learning needs of their students, a far different psychology than the one present in education today.

The deep fear in allowing and encouraging students to possess their own learning is that they will reveal the huge failure of much of current pedagogy because the current system of education that does not have effective ways to strike a balance between student and instructor agendas. Because of the immense gap in student evaluations and tenured professorships, most professors are above and beyond any accountability (from students) that could affect their teaching. Accountability in teaching is likely to play a role in the classes

taught by part-time graduate students and lecturers. Once the publishing aspect of scholarship or the administrative demands of the university begin to play a significant role in the pursuit of tenure, teaching can very easily become window dressing rather than the window. As Peter Elbow discovered during his years developing his pedagogy, he did not have to take student concerns into account to forward an agenda. In fact the system of education was set up so that he could basically ignore student agendas altogether, "if a student's goals, perceptions, and motivations can fit into that structure [the structure of a prescribe classroom], fine; if not too bad. I have tried to turn that model on its head. The core of my course is each student's goal, perceptions and willingness to do something about it" (71). The essential difference between Friere, Elbow and other modern theorists and that of classical rhetoricians is essentially the difference between learning/persuading through honest dialogue and learning/persuading through manipulation. In a revolutionary pedagogy, the means is as important as the end. The dialogue and writing that unlocks students' ability to become self-aware individual and community action does not need a closure.

An agenda towards pedagogy that is revolutionary in the sense that Friere is talking about can feel uncomfortable to the conservative instructor because it often means revealing the magician's tricks of teaching, the unwritten coda or hidden agendas. I think Peter Elbow summed it up most honestly when he wrote, "But it is threatening to send the new, more accurate message. It makes me feel more vulnerable. And it permits students who probably ought to do X to say the hell with it -- sometimes purely out of a spirit of contrariness" (79). The risk of truly revolutionary openness is that things may not go the way they ought, but what is being begged in this example *is* the *ought*. Students have to find their own agenda for their learning for it to be an authentic experience. The pedagogue brings to the spirit of learning his or her experience of the journey *type* that each student in the class could be

engaging in with regard to the material s/he is teaching. Each student journey is as individual as the instructor's, but there are some short cuts, thoughtful approaches, ways of helping students see more, and guidances that the pedagogue can offer. My experience instructing has led me to discover that students go farther, deeper, better when I open the class up using the agendas presented by Friere and Elbow.

A Frierian approach to teaching forces the instructor to be most clear about his/her goals, not only with the students, but with him/herself as well. "And it is true enough that college teachers are characteristically unclear about their goals. Many haven't even decided what *kind* of things their goals are; that is they haven't made it clear to themselves to what extent their goals consist of: effects upon their student behavior, thinking or character, or effects upon their own behavior or knowledge; or effects upon published knowledge" (Elbow 120). Over my years of teaching critical thinking (English 102) and narrative (English 105) at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, I have, because of Elbow, Berthoff, Friere, Vygotsky, invested a lot of energy into becoming very clear about my goals with those courses. To help me frame my goals I have engaged in practices and dialogues that invited the students to participate in shaping those goals and agendas. In the next chapter I will discuss the results of these negotiations in a theoretical/practical model I have named the Transforming Classroom. My centermost goal with students is to transform them, to teach them in such a way that by the end of the course they not only feel transformed, but can think and talk about their transformation. Writing and dialogue are the two key ingredients to help them with both acts of transformation. Writing in my courses involves stretching one's thinking by taking risks in the process and by looking at and reflecting on the risks taken. The dialogue I promote in the class strives to advance thinking while often pausing to reflect on the thinking that is going into the dialogue. The transformation I seek in the critical

thinking course reflects the philosophy of that course -- to show students ways to improve their critical thinking, that critical thinking is an exercise they always already engage in, and to convince them that critical thinking is a vital part of their life experience. The same is true of the narrative course, in which I try to persuade students to see that narrative is everywhere and that, ultimately, of all the things they will possess in their lives, their stories are the part of their lives that will go with them to the end of their days.

When I walk into that classroom I do not accept the luxury created by the real situation that places the students in my classes because of all sorts of hidden and overt pressures: the course is required, the course fulfills a requirement, they need to go to college to get a descent job later in life, or their parents expected them to go to college. I find no greater "bamboozlement" among instructors and administrators than the discussions that ignore or disregard this privilege. When I ask my class why they are taking my course the inevitable answers hover somewhere around, "it fulfills a requirement" or "I have to take it." The answer I do not hear, but most want to hear of course is "I chose to take this course." I realize that the system will not suddenly open itself up and allow students to choose their own courses without a general college framework forcibly guiding them: whole departments, probably mine (English), might go under (then again, it might not). But to do so would violate the basic belief that undergraduate students do not inherently know what is best for themselves and it is the *responsibility* of the university to insure that the students *do right by themselves*. Therefore, they are required to get a well rounded education. As a rhetorician going into the community of my classroom, I know that my audience is going to need some serious persuading to get them authentically interested in my courses.

Taking on an agenda of this sort means challenging even the most fundamental aspects of what teaching apparently represents in the great sea of pedagogical ideology. One

place this challenge begins is in the very language of the classroom and scholarship. I think one of the most significant moments in my teaching career came when I realized that I had all of this power -- to make choices about what would be read, what would count as good and bad behavior, what would count and not count as valid reasons for missing class or turning in work late. The students came into the classroom giving me all sorts of power and authority that stretched into areas outside of my field of expertise because of my position in a system and their position in system. It can be overwhelming when the awareness hits that it is your job to lead and you are expected to lead and you have been given the power to lead.

If I choose to reveal power relations to the students and/or if I choose to give up some aspect of the power I have when I enter the classroom, then the entire dynamic of learning will be affected. It happens that, for me, giving up power becomes the dynamic of learning. The heart and soul of my critical thinking class is a penetrating critique of the very nature of the class itself. Through dialogue with the students I have come to trust that they can develop an understanding regarding their own learning if I share power with them in the classroom. A classroom agenda of this sort often leads to different ways of learning the material that have equal validity among and around the differences in student and teacher agendas. Exploring the differences in the students and their agendas and their relationship to my agendas in a context of community discussion reduces hierarchy and broadens learning. When I teach the narrative class, I do not have a prescribed expectation of the narrative I will see from students in my mind. I have to wait and see what students decide to compose as their starting point. The framework is not evaluative, but rather functional. I expect students to give me a certain number of pages of work, but I do not have a set expectation of what type of narrative it will be. They could choose to write fiction or non-fiction or some combination of the two or some variant of one or the other -- science fiction, horror,

autobiography, biography, etc. Only after I have the draft do I begin a dialogue with them about the work they have chosen to produce. I bring the experience I have as a writer and thinker about writing to their composition and suggest ideas that I think may help them in developing their narrative. Even so, these remains suggestions and even by the second draft I only ask that they complete another set number of pages. As long as they are working on the narrative and producing more work around their own ideas, they are satisfying the beginning of the learning process. By giving them a space of non-evaluative freedom, I encourage the student to find his/her own path through his/her writing and if s/he honestly explores that, then s/he is learning.

So how does an instructor operating with the agendas I have proposed in the text thus far evaluate students? Mostly, I get the students to do the evaluating for me. The great pedagogical leap in the transformation from a mere receiver of information into a thinker in one's own right occurs when the student can say of his or her work, "this is good and this is my best effort and this is what I have learned from others and taught myself." To reach this understanding in my own pedagogy I began to really try to think what it means to earn an "A" for a course. What does it mean to be "Superior," not just average or above average, but the best. The pedagogical insight is not a competition to be the best (though that is certainly one way of evaluating students), which requires some standard in which all students are compressed, usually by examination. The insight comes from finding a way to have the student achieve the best work s/he can within the context of his/her experience in the class. To achieve this one must recognize that not all the students in the classroom are operating within the same zone of development and one's teaching must have the flexibility to reach out to all the students. This is the ideal, even if the reality hampers it. The great challenge of any ideal is to find real ways to get to it in the experience of teaching. That is what the

Transforming Classroom represents, a practical application that reflects the best of theory regarding pedagogy. It is alive and dynamic, negotiating, dialectic, self-aware, up front with agendas, and authentic.

Meaning, Thinking, Interpreting

As with degrees of difference, the best writers in various fields express a common meta understanding of meaning/thinking/interpreting. Their common meta thinking reflects shared beliefs in the construction of reality, the adaptability and flexibility of language, interpretation as a creative act, context dependent meaning, and probability. Perhaps the best area to begin the broad sweep through different fields is in rhetoric, since it is one of those fields of study that threads its way through all fields.

Rhetoric:

> Most words, as they pass from context to context, change their meanings: and in many different ways. ... It is only a superstition when it forgets (as it commonly does) that the stability of the meaning of a word comes from the constancy of the contexts that give it meaning. Stability in a word's meaning is not something to be assumed, but always something to be explained. (Richards 11)
>
> How words mean, is not a question to which we can safely accept an answer either as an inheritance from common sense, that curious growth, or as something vouched for by science, by psychology, say -- since other sciences use words themselves and not least delusively when they address themselves to these questions. (Richards 23)

Richards, like Gould, resists any reified notions regarding meaning. This does not suggest that meanings freely scatter about when challenged or misunderstood. In fact, many words have considerable stability that can be quite resistant to challenges to their meaning. What often changes them is real life shifts in the way the word get used. Consider how the word marriage is likely to evolve in meaning if gay/lesbian partners successfully petition the courts to legally recognize their unions as marriages. Many of the meanings deeply embedded in

the word have begun to surface under the revolutionary actions of gay/lesbian partners, not the least of which is the economic advantages that heterosexual couples receive by being married: tax breaks, medical privileges, mutual life insurance policies, and on and on. Additional to the problem of seeking to explain meaning finally and completely is the very use of more words to do it. Here again, though, this does not mean that meaning cannot be agreed upon. Actually, that is exactly what happens, agreement about the meaning, which is something that can be explained. What rhetoric needs, as does every field, is strong explanatory models that provide definitions, yet remain open to the changes likely to occur through real world change.

Interpretation:

> Thus, interpretation is not (as most people assume) an absolute value, a gesture of mind situated in some timeless realm of capabilities. Interpretation must itself be evaluated, within a historical view of human consciousness. (Iser 11)
>
> When, for instance, we say that a literary work is good or bad, we are making a value judgment. But when we are asked to substantiate that judgment, we have recourse to criteria that are not values in themselves, but simply denote features of the work under discussion. We may even compare these features with those of other works, but in differentiating between them we are merely extending the range of our criteria, which still does not constitute a value. (Iser 25)
>
> Because of the reluctance to consider the reader, the field [of literary theory] was slow to respond to reader response criticism with its attention to the reader's role in creating meaning in a text. (LeFevre 39)
>
> ... there are not only great art and great artists, but great readers. (Bruner 153)

Wolfgang Iser comes at the problem from a different perspective, but in the same way. Interpretation is as much a creative act as producing a work of art, an act constrained "within a historical view of human consciousness." Because everyone interpreting, and

everyone does interpret, has to do so using some criteria, they cannot escape their own historical, personal, and cultural context. Since the one absolute is context, which is never absolute, then all people are faced with the prospect that interpretation, like rhetoric, is not ever final, but probable in degrees. The criteria a person uses to evaluate a work of literature or another person or an experience may appear to that person to be "values in themselves," which reflect reified notions in their mind that they learned in their personal history. These people make the meaning of their interpretations out to be values they merely apprehended, completely ignoring the steps that occurred in their learning to lead them to that conclusion.

Anthropology:

> To see social institutions, social customs, social changes as in some sense "readable" is to alter our whole sense of what such interpretation is and shift it toward modes of thought rather more familiar to the translator, the exegete, or the iconographer than to the test giver, the factor analyst, or the pollster. (Geertz 31)
>
> ... purist dogmas designed to keep supposed universes of learning properly distinct are more than obstructive, they are actively misleading. The notion of the self-interpreting text on the literary side or of the material determinations of consciousness on the social science side may have their uses, or they may not; but so far as understanding how the constructions of other people's imagination connect to those of our own, they head us off precisely in the wrong direction -- toward an isolation of the meaning-form aspects of matter from the practical contexts that give them life. (Geertz 48)

Geertz adds to the notion that making meaning and interpreting meaning are both creative acts and that humans are responsible for both those acts of creation. In stating it so clearly, Geertz places the responsibility of meaning/thinking/interpreting squarely on the shoulders of the human animal. When set in such an environment the only way possible to absolve oneself of that responsibility is through cognitive states of thinking that are "actively misleading." Meaning gets its life from context, actual happenings, intersubjective interaction. Meaning is never stagnant, though it can be stagnated. The human mind can

enforce reified notions onto other subjects and objects, so long as their power holds out. But such a limiting view of meaning has nothing to do with any inherent or eternal qualities of meaning, but in the ability of power to sustain itself.

Psychology:

> Written speech, on the contrary [from oral speech], must explain the situation fully in order to be intelligible. The change from maximally compact inner speech to maximally detailed written speech requires what might be called deliberate semantics -- deliberate structuring of the web of meaning. (Vygotsky T&L 182)
>
> "Meaning" is the largest and most efficient unit of analysis that we can bring to bear from what we know already to what we are trying to read (or hear) and understand. (Smith 96)
>
> Finally, it is quite impossible to say how many alternative meanings there might be for a passage of text, because that depends entirely on what an individual reader is looking for, but it is obvious that reading is easier when the reader finds the material meaningful than when comprehension is a struggle (Smith 155)

Both Smith and Vygotsky realize that meaning comes out of the web of meanings and flows back into the web of meanings. In psychological terms, meaning is the air minds breath. It's all around and it's necessary for sustaining life. Psychologically and cognitively, meaning/thinking/interpreting are always already going on to some degree or another. At the basic, most functional level are foundational or reified notions, but at higher levels, people come to realize that they can actively change their minds or have their minds changed by experiences. The whole of transcendentalism is founded on the experience that people have had when a sudden insight occurs to transform them from ignorance to understanding. The epiphany (both as an event and an idea) shows how meanings can be just floating along around a person or within them when suddenly (through an epiphany) the person "gets" the meaning of something. Meaning's building blocks are other meanings -- infinite regress and infinite progress.

The movement from the meta theoretical to the practical often requires degrees of movement through theory space. This section, like the two before it, represent some of the theoretical stages "just prior" to practical application. However, none of this process should be thought of in a linear way, the apparent linear"ness" is just that, "apparent." The real act of pedagogy is constantly dynamic and constantly moving in, around, back and forth from the practical to theoretical to meta theoretical, often in a single class period. All that I have done over my years of teaching is refine the process; the complexity is still there, but the messiness has, to the degree that negative chaos can be managed, been reduced. Striking a good balance between chaos and order is very important because chaos is the energy that fuels creativity and order is the energy that sees that creativity achieves concrete results. Too much of one or the other can lead to stagnation. Like the video game player that has learned to make complex moves into reflex action, the pedagogue can use theory to be both smart and quick in responding to unexpected shifts in the classroom discussion. S/he can channel the positive flow of chaos through the course while still giving the course a direction, an idea I plan to show in the next chapter, when I explore actual teaching and show students responding to the Transforming Classroom.

Another of the contributions of the theorists quoted above is the continued and enlarged understanding of the pedagogical situation and the constant presence of so many elements that go into that situation. Thinking, meaning, writing and interpreting all play a role in the student/instructor dynamic. The role to consider for a radical and future pedagogy involves seeing the complexity of educating and recognizing that teaching is about negotiation, creating action in students (getting them to think about thinking) rather than reaction (test taking), finding ways to make writing meaningful, and showing students that reading is a creative, interpretive, empowering experience. Because of the position I take

regarding the construction of knowledge, I do not and cannot really think of meaning, thinking, writing or interpreting as part of an objectivity I need to discover and then transmit to my students. Rather, those four things are part of my creative process and creative interaction with students, fellow colleagues, the university administration/policies, current scholarship and so forth. Such a vision of pedagogy reframes some of the most basic aspects of instruction, from grading to the role I assume when I walk into the class. Like Clifford Geertz, who has an uncanny knack for identifying the center of the matter, I have been trying to demonstrate that many things are always, already present in the classroom dynamic and it is not a matter of persuading someone that they are there, but a matter of how those things will be dealt with. As he says, "whether one wants to shout '*vive la difference!*' or '*a bas la difference!*,' the sheer existence of *la difference* is not subject to much discussion. The view of the legendary little girl -- that people come in two kinds, plain and fancy -- may have been lamentably unliberated; but that she noticed something anatomically real seems apparent enough" (81). Thus, ideas like personality, agendas, degrees of difference, intersubjectivity, power, and dialectical relationships are not up for grabs in any ontological sense, but are up for grabs in the *ways* they are dealt with by instructors.

The instructors who believe and teach one text/one meaning are still interpreting and they are doing so in a theoretical way. In fact, reading and interpreting a text microcosmically reflects the continuum of meta theory and practice as it moves back and forth. The foundationalist theorist is the one that wants to stop the process once s/he reaches the practical level, as if all is said and done. That is but one mere pattern and its theoretical roar comes from its claim to closure in some objective and finalized way. That may work in a closed environment, but life is hardly so narrow; it just happens to be complex enough to allow foundationalist positions to co-exist with other non-foundationalist positions. I find

that I have discovered, both through the scholarship reading the theorists that undergird this entire work and my own experience in a classroom, that the better an instructor is able to understand the fuzzy edges, the thresholds of learning (zones of proximal development), the meaning making in interpreting, the value of mistakes and interest as a component in thinking, the better s/he will be able to perform the role of pedagogue. And perhaps the most important aspect of pedagogical work, which is what I think makes the work of many of these theorists uncomfortable, is the naked revelations regarding responsibility and power that the theorists bring to the forefront of the conversations in the fields of writing, thinking, composing, and interpreting.

Making Meals People Will Eat

I started this chapter with a cooking metaphor because cooking generally has a very practical end, getting food to the point where it can be served and eaten. Cooking also has many metaphors about and around it that work nicely when thinking of ways to better communicate an understanding of the type of teaching I want to demonstrate in the final chapter of this work. Also, all of us have a common experience with cooking and dining, we recognize degrees of difference in our foods and beverages, and we know what foods we like best and we enjoy as part of our practical daily lives. In my years as a student I had to eat a lot food I didn't like, that didn't settle well on my stomach, that had no taste, that promised something exciting but tasted awful, or that turned out to be inedible. And the really frustrating part of it all is that I had no choice but to pay for those meals, the fine print at the bottom of the menu that said, 'Required Course.' It may sound as if I am promoting a "customer is always right" policy of educating. That is not quite right, I am promoting a "customer has the right to expect" good service, quality food, proper preparation, attentiveness, and a positive attitude. Lost somewhere in the bureaucracy of educating

through an institution and a collegiate system is the idea that educating is a service industry. Unlike the simpler situation of a customer at a restaurant who can easily refuse to pay for a bad meal or refuse to tip for bad service, students are often caught in situations where they have to pay for the meal and the gratuity is automatically included.[3]

Another key difference between a dining out/restaurant comparison with teaching/universities has to do with the melding of the chef and the server in the classroom (dining room). In the best restaurants, servers are usually hired because of their people skills. When customers are spending upwards of $100.00 per couple (and students thousands for tuition), a restaurateur wants people to represent his/her establishment that will give the customer a pleasant experience which will want to make them return.[4] In the kitchen, the restaurateur wants a chef who is efficient, creative, and knowledgeable, but s/he doesn't necessarily have to have a winning personality. His/her job is to put the food out, not interact with the customer. Most chefs I have known would make the worst servers because they're too temperamental. The pedagogue, on the other hand, has to prepare the food and serve it. The problem I have run into most is too many instructors with a chef's knowledge and mentality rather than a server's sensitivity (this is not to say I have not known some servers who have bad attitudes or chefs that have good ones). Teaching is not either/or but both. The best teachers are like the best hosts of parties in their homes or the best of restaurants that have excellent chefs and excellent staffs; they combine great food (ideas) with great service (teaching).

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[3] When I say that gratuity is included, I mean that negative student evaluations that would count as a criticism or no tip can easily be ignored, especially by tenured faculty members, since tenure is the tip included. It is common practice in the business of dining out that if you receive bad service that you leave a penny instead of no tip because symbolically it means that you had service but it was particularly bad.

[4] Nothing pleases me more as a pedagogue than to have students take more than one class from me and recommend me to their friends

Often times I find that where theory is most helpful regarding pedagogy is where theorists understand and still maintain that teaching is a service to others; instructing is meant to help. When education fails to serve the needs and interests of its paying customers, it becomes a liability rather than a cornerstone of civilization. The educating I am talking about is not the basic functional learning of the laws of the society or the skills for minimal participation in a complex civilization, but the higher learning of ethics, meaning, interpreting, collaboration, composing, negotiating, and specialization. The classroom, as I have said in chapter three, is a space in which the most powerful cognitive development can occur for students with the help of instructors. For this transformation to occur optimally, the student and the instructor have to engage one another at levels and in zones where both are participating actively. The active learning environment is the one I have found to be the most successful at creating transformation for the most students. To be able to work with all the difference and divergence one can often find in a classroom, a pedagogue needs to be very comfortable navigating back and forth from theory to practice, and sometimes on the spot in the classroom.

The Movement Into Practice

This chapter was meant to be a transition from the highly theoretical discussions of chapter three into the practical application of my classrooms, which will follow in the next chapter. All of the theorists discussed in this work share some common meta positions that I have attempted to clarify early on and I have worked to link them along certain conceptual threads -- intersubjectivity, degrees of difference, agendas, meaning/thinking/interpreting. This framework has been constructed for one primary purpose, defining and proposing a theory of pedagogy that optimizes teaching and learning in composition/critical thinking/narrative courses. Many of the secondary purposes (some I hope the reader

discovers that I did not think of) were aimed at addressing elements of the classroom that do not normally get addressed in pedagogical theory, but certainly play a role in actual teaching -- student interest, personality, and personal standpoints. All of this has been meant to generate thinking in the reader who is beginning to teach or is beginning to think about his/her teaching or is wanting to think about his/her teaching.

While there are many practices that the theories either support or find as the best conduits of the ideas proposed; there are a number of things traditional in educating that these theories challenge and even oppose[5]. One thing these theories do account for best is variety in teaching situations, techniques, instructor and student personalities, and difference. Rarely is similarity as great a challenge to teaching as diversity; but even when it is, these theories have the explanatory power to confront any challenges. That is why I am promoting them. Ultimately, these theories empower instructors in the most crucial of ways because they so readily account for and wisely identify many of the elements of the classroom context that exist only to be interpreted by pedagogical theory (i.e., they are not created by the theory nor are they eliminated ... they are either dealt with or ignored). Which means, that each reader of this text should understand that s/he constructs the classroom they enter, depending on the degree of freedom their institution allows (of course). But even the institution that has explicit rules for teaching can never eliminate all the possibilities of interpretation, and therein lies the true power of the pedagogue and the true source of his/her/my responsibility to the students. These theories and my own interpretation of them are all for and about

[5] For example, these theories encourage active participation among students by utilizing group dynamics and conversation, which takes learning in directions different from lecture and question/answer class sessions. These theories also see learning holistically and consider evaluation best achieved through long term, incremental assessment rather than periodic testing and examination. At their most radical, these theories challenge the notion of grading altogether, learning as a linear process, and learning as neutral or objective in any moral sense.

embracing that center, sharing knowledge of that center with students, and using that center as the optimum learning context.

What you will read in the next chapter of this text will be my own peculiar and particular development of the theories into actual practice in the classroom. That practice was governed and guided by a number of factors so unique as not to able to be duplicated: they are unique to who I am and am not. Perhaps some of you reading this text will share personality traits or teaching contexts that allow for the possibility of trying exactly some of the things I will have attempted in my classrooms at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. I suspect most will not. I even suspect that some may not realize how much they could try (that's a transformation that is most fun to experience). Whatever the case, the meta aspect of the theories proposed should be that instructors learn to trust in themselves, know themselves, and know how best to negotiate all the factors that must be brought into alignment to teach successfully to any group of people over one.

CHAPTER 5

The Transforming Classroom

*****Course Evaluations. English 102-06.07 (Critical Thinking). Fall 1995*

"This course has advanced my thinking. It has encouraged me to see other people's way of thinking through class discussion."
Erin Proctor

"The discussions lead me to later discuss those issues with other people. Even though I didn't say much, I did like some of the discussions. I liked the open relationships discussion the most ... no, I also liked it when Rebecca's friend came in to speak with us also. It made me wonder more about different things."
Keema Cooper

"This class really has advanced my thinking. I was already a critical thinker of others, but now I am of myself. Although my critical thinking may not always come across in what I say or write, I am working on it. This was the main benefit I got from this class."
Erin Dadey

"This course has advanced me as a thinker in a few ways. It has taught me to be patient with other people and their ideas even if I don't agree with them. It has taught me to listen and observe carefully people's sentences and what that person may or may not mean with their comments."
Erin Reedy

*****Course Evaluations. English 105 (Introduction to Narrative). Spring 1996*

"I believe that the greatest amount of learning was achieved by means of discussion and dialogues between various members of the class, including Philip."
Sari Abdalla

"The writing part of the course was appropriate. It did not limit the writer to a subject that was unimportant, but rather allowed for differences among the students."
Patricia Espinoza

"In this class you learn through experience."
Becky Armbruster

"I learned that writing can be fun if you write about something that is important to you."
Matt Bullard

"What did I learn about narrative? Of course, IT'S EVERYWHERE!!! Which honestly I've never thought of it in those terms. Never thought of narrative within grocery stores, or in parking lots ... let alone the story of haircuts and tattoos."
Tammi Roberts

"I should mention that I learned a few terms and was exposed to books I'd never read before. I didn't realize the vast scope of narrative and how it invades every aspect of our lives. This makes sense then to teach a narrative class just like life."
Peter Bouldry

Building the Container for Liquid Pedagogy

All of the theory and meta theory so far discussed in this text eventually occur as actual events in the classroom. A pedagogical reality is constructed, teaching occurs, and talk solidifies into papers, discourse, and grades. The Transforming Classroom is a theory model that has been constructed to help instructors achieve at the highest level what all teaching strives to accomplish in every classroom of every grade school, high school, and university -- namely transformation from less knowledge and experience about a subject to greater knowledge. I have been trying to create, in my actual teaching, courses that achieve transformation in students to the highest degree possible in the context of their complex everyday experience, negotiating the academic and social world of the university as well as their lives outside school. When the students and I make a class happen, when they dialogue with me and each other, my agendas and the material of the class, we transform our situation into a pedagogical interaction where ideas and experiences get discussed in an "academic" way. In this chapter I will explore three class I have taught that best exemplify the Transforming Classroom as a pedagogical reality, as something that actually happened in my teaching experience and something I can now create because of my understanding of theory, meta theory and all of their branches -- degrees of difference, agendas, intersubjectivity, interpretation, etc. The theory and meta theory I have discussed throughout this work remain abstract and "open" until applied. Many applications in an actual classroom are unique to the instructor who teaches the material and the context in which s/he teaches. But many of the applications contain common threads. Within the following case studies or thick descriptions of my courses, as well as within the writings of my students from the courses, I plan to conclude this work with a demonstration of authentic pedagogical "theory-at-work."

Transformation: The Pedagogue's Actualization

If people thinking about education try to get behind every detail of education, to penetrate to its primary essence, then they will arrive at the basic notion that teaching is about transforming students into better thinkers, and more to the point, about transforming into knowing better and more about a subject or skill. Even the student and instructor most unclear in their notions of their role in the university will vaguely understand that by the end of the journey through the coursework, the students should know more and be better in some ways than when they started out. As I discussed in chapter 4, there are degrees of difference in the amount of transformation that often occurs for a student and the potential success of ideas to help students transform. These degrees of difference can be affected by various factors including race, class, gender, age, experience, personality and so on. My search as an instructor has been for the most and best transformation possible in any context that I find myself teaching in, which means talking with students to understand the context that they form as "students of X university." This goal has lead me to realize that I need many theories to help in the actualizing of a Transfoming Classroom. The easiest thing for me to bring to a classroom is the knowledge in my area of expertise: rhetoric and composition. The pedagogical task is far trickier than the scholarly one because it involves not only learning a subject intensely but being able to transmit that learning to students, transforming the students with the knowledge and scholarship of an academic discipline so they can become "more" and "better" (as thinkers in general and as thinkers in an instructor's specific field of learning). Being a pedagogue is not just about having expert knowledge, but moving that knowledge into the student's thinking as something useful in their lives. I intend "useful" to mean many things other than mere "pragmatic, problem-solving, help the student get a job in

the real world" useful. For some students what will be useful about composition is how it provides a way for them to think about their personal problems, or literature may help them in their ethical development, or a study of rhetoric may help them better communicate and interpret their parents, friends and romantic relationships.

I am and have always been interested in the holistic experience of teaching/learning. In other words, it is not enough for someone to simply "profess" to be considered as what I am trying to define as a pedagogue. As one student nicely put it:

> *Amanda Teague (English 105, Spring 1996):*
> *"In order to 'teach' I believe that it is critical to let the pupil feel like he or she is actually a part of the learning process. ... That is the one thing I hate most about college. There are so many people who just 'profess' and they never take time to teach. They believe that a doctorate or twenty degrees from ten different universities will make them a better professor or teacher. In fact all these pieces of paper do for them is give them a better ability to 'profess.' [They] profess the knowledge that they have spent the past ten years of their life learning, unfortunately, most of the time, they never slow down and take the time to 'teach.'"*

The distinction that Amanda makes is very important because it recognizes the social aspect of teaching that has to be mastered in order for someone to succeed optimally as an instructor. The lack of human interaction that comes from merely professing is little different than reading a text or watching a video. And why not just have the students do that: it would be far more cost effective. To teach, to engage in the act of socially transmitting knowledge from one subject to the next, means that instructors have to be adept at successful communication skills and highly knowledgeable in their field of study. Too often, and I can speak from my own experience (like Amanda), I was taught by extremely intelligent, well read, scholarly people who had no teaching skills. And, as I have been initiated through the academic world, I have discovered that the fault often lies in the university institution for

assuming that knowledge and teaching somehow exist in a compressed relationship. A great scholar and writer can be a horrible instructor because teaching is a different skill than scholarly study or writing. As a result, scholars thrown into the classroom on the merit of their knowledge resort to professing because they have not been trained to teach. This text is written to address this problem

As I have attempted to breathe a certain type of life into the term pedagogue, I see the actualization of an instructor who desires to be a pedagogue as someone who realizes that true transformation can only occur when real connections are made with students. Authentic learning is intrapersonal; it is dialectic and dialogic. To achieve or reach this level of instructing, I have had to move beyond simply professing my knowledge at a group of students. I have to find ways to engage them. To do this I have had to listen to and learn from the students in order for the courses I teach to have the greatest impact on their learning. [To create a place where student voices can engage me in this way, I have found a few key theories and practices that need to be put into place at the outset of the course.] Sometimes this goal is best achieved by helping the students understand what it means to be students. For the student/teacher dialectic to function as a flow of energy and exchange -- a live wire sending and receiving signals back and forth -- students have to capable of receiving. The essence of a student, his or her essential nature if you will, is to be open to receiving. In the I Ching, the Book of Changes, there are 64 hexagrams to describe aspects of life. The fourth hexagram, Meng (Youthful Folly) perfectly describes the essential student:

> *In the time of youth, folly is not an evil. One may succeed in spite of it, provided one finds an experienced teacher and has the right attitude toward him [her]. This means, first of all, that the youth him[her]self must be conscious of his [her] lack of experience and must seek out the teacher. Without this modesty and this interest there is no guarantee that he [she] has the necessary receptivity, which should express itself in respectful acceptance of the teacher. This is the reason why the teacher must wait to be sought out instead of offering him[her]self. Only thus can the instruction take place at the right time and in the right way. (21)*

In our society of prescribed education such an ideal learning/teaching situation is second to required learning. Like Wolfgang Iser's idea that any claim to objectivity is really a mask for sophisticated subjectivity, the claim that education is a choice is a cover for the sophisticated "reality" of the education industry. Students rarely have the chance to reach a state of consciousness about their lack of experience and teachers can hardly wait for students to seek them out. Also as part of the modern education dynamic, teachers are forced to offer themselves to the student. The ideal is derailed from both sides. For this reason, students often end up in class without the "necessary receptivity" for learning and instructors have to present their knowledge artificially to students who may not be receptive or who lack the necessary preparation to learn the material. Instructors in the modern classroom do not have the luxury of having a room full of students meeting at the "right time" and in the "right way" and students do not have the luxury of learning at a pace appropriate to their interest or knowledge. Sometimes, to be sure, there is synchronicity between an instructor and student even in a prescribed learning environment, but then again those are not areas of struggle in learning. Because education is "forced," meaning that it is not allowed to flow of its own accord, both students and instructors have to negotiate towards learning that occurs in the "right way." This negotiation begins with a meta move on the part of the instructor, who must attempt to create the "necessary receptivity" in the students pedagogically. If students that do not have the "necessary receptivity" can be prepared to receive, then the primary task of the pedagogue can actually occur, which would be finding the right pedagogy with which to teach the student the material of the course. Skipping ahead to teaching the material

without getting students into the "conceptual space" of being ready and willing to receive will only result in a failed or incomplete pedagogical experience.

More important than any prior knowledge or experience with the material being taught is the student's desire and interest to learn the material. If that starting point is not "offered" to the student, then the teaching and the learning will be hollow. It is an unfortunate "fact" of the learning situation that both the student and the instructor do not get to meet each other ideally. However, thanks to theory and meta theory, the instructor can have the pedagogical wherewithal to create, or at least offer to the student, a situation open to the ideal. It is this creative process that separates the pedagogue from the profess-er, that requires of the scholar who teaches to develop skills beyond scholarship, to be adept at social relationships *and* the study of his/her field of knowledge. One application will not fit all the various and dynamic situations an instructor will face from one semester to the next, hence the need for theory in pedagogy. Pedagogical situations are organic and chaotic and must have the flexibility to adapt and grow. But within the most complex and chaotic systems, one can still find methods and frames with which to understand and participate within the system. In his book Media Virus Douglas Rushkoff provides a particularly lucid definition of chaos:

> Remember, chaos does not mean random; chaotic systems have an underlying order to them.
>
> The main principles of chaos, as described by today's mathematics community, are called "feedback" and "iteration." If a system exhibits these two qualities, it is behaving in a "chaotic" way. Feedback is the ability for something to interact with its environmental conditions. A heater's thermostat is the simplest example of a feedback device. When the room gets too cold, the thermostat turns the heat on, changing the environment in the room. When the room gets too hot, the thermostat shuts the heat off, regulating the temperature in its environment by feeding back information through the heating system. There are also many such feedback loops in nature. When the population in a field gets too high, the population of its predators, say, hawks, also increases. The world gets more dangerous for the

> rats, fewer survive, and the rat population decreases again. The remaining hawk overpopulation will be corrected by the decrease in available food, and soon this population will decrease back to normal levels. All chaotic systems -- including the media -- have many channels for feedback.
>
> The principle of iteration is related to feedback. When a microphone is placed too close to the speaker into which it is being amplified, it can make a loud screech. We call this "feedback" because the microphone is "listening" to its own amplified sound and then feeding that sound back into the speaker. But in the case of the microphone, this process repeats itself again and again. The microphone hears its own sound, feeds it back into the speaker, hears that sound, feeds it back, and so on, thousands of times a second. This feedback reiterates so many times that it develops into a terribly loud sound. The principle can be observed in economics. If the government, say, miscalculated the pay rate of all its employees by one-half cent an hour, when this tiny error is multiplied to reflect all the hours every employee works in a year, it "iterates" into an error of millions of dollars. (33-34)

Both ideas of feedback and iteration develop through class discussions. Feedback occurs naturally if students/students and instructor/students interact through dialogue. The instructor must often act as the thermostat in the environment to regulate fluctuations. But this does not always mean that iteration cannot or will not occur. If topics for discussion are particularly personal or volatile (say religion or abortion), iteration can quickly develop much in the same way that the microphone and speaker amplify one another until something blows out (usually the speaker). Because the teaching environment is a chaotic system, negotiating it requires many thinking skills at once. Finding a way to talk practically *and* theoretically within and about this environment has been central goal of this work ... the meta theory. The meta theory is both the repository of the mass of theories and ideas that a thinker/pedagogue can reach into to shape the methods that will best suit an actual classroom situation and the repository formed from the all the potential theories as they mesh and blend together. The following look into the classes I have taught should reveal how the theories were actualized to suit the context of my teaching experience.

Community and the Classroom: Getting Started

Perhaps the most important activity in developing an actual Transforming Classroom is the process of creating community among the students in the class. Real and authentic learning of the type that Paulo Friere, Peter Elbow, Lev Vygotsky, Ann Berthoff and the other thinkers discussed in past chapters has been best accomplished through my classes where a community of discourse has grown out of student interaction. The best way to foster discourse among students is to make a community of the classroom, which means much more than just having a group of students present in the same square space. When the students can discourse among themselves about the subject(s) of the course, they can begin to develop threads about the material that reflect their interest and agendas. In order for a situation like this to develop, the beginnings of the course must be somewhat open. The degree of openness allowed for by the instructor at the start of a course is one of the aspects of designing a class that can be (and usually is) done without student input. In that time before class actually begins, when the syllabus is made up and the requirements of the course considered and decided, the full weight of teaching's power and responsibility can be felt by the instructor. Instructors have the choice to limit a class in a number of ways that will narrow and/or expand the chances of transformation; professing rather than teaching is one way to avoid open discourse and the messiness that can sometimes come from it. But it also keeps potential creativity and development among students who need an interactive spark from ever having the chance to occur. I even suspect there are some academians who probably think a narrowly focused and applied course design is for the best because only an elite few students successfully "cross over." But any good research into this belief will reveal, not great teaching, but usually some form of cultural, economic or gender bias that

passes for exceptional learning on the part of the few students who succeed extremely well in these contexts.[1]

To avoid such a "trap" in teaching, I find it necessary to incorporate student opinions or anticipate student interest and concern when making out the syllabus for my classes. Past interactions help guide me in setting a course up in ways that I think will most easily facilitate the transformation and transmission of the material that is my responsibility to teach. Those past courses helped me understand how to design a Transforming Classroom appropriate to the material and the types of students I was teaching at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. When I sit down to construct the course each semester, I do not know the exact type of community I will encounter, though I do have some good general guesses from the UNCG student pool of students I have taught. For this reason, one aspect of the Transforming Classroom "theory" requires that the initial syllabus remain open and flexible so that the material can adapt with the agendas of the students. One of the great things about teaching introductory level courses is that the material in those courses is usually so broad as to allow for the learning to occur organically. Organic learning develops in present time fashion; it unfolds as the action of teaching and learning meet dynamically in the class. For organic learning to take place, certain foundations have to established at the outset of the course. These foundations are the very stuff of the theory of the Transforming Classroom. The theory of the Transforming Classroom contains methods that can be reduplicated by myself and other pedagogues to help realize transformation in particular classroom contexts in various university situations.

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[1] One of the best critiques of cultural and economic bias can be found in Jonathon Kozol's Savage Inequalities and one of the best critiques of gender bias can be found in Myra and David Sadker's Failing at Fairness.

The Name Game: Naming the "Other"

What never ceases to amaze me as an instructor is how simple some solutions can be to some rather large problems. Of course, such thinking is not always true, but when it comes to trying to establish a classroom community, there is one simple thing that the instructor can do to begin the process ... require students to know the names of every other student in the classroom. I have been a part of (as a student) and observed (as a fellow instructor) classrooms of silence when instructors have been desperately seeking discussion. I have concluded that the reason so many courses designed for discussion (and instructors who encourage discussion) fail comes from the simple distrust, fear or ignorance of the "other." In my graduate career, I read a lot about "otherness" in literary theory, mostly as a jargonistic way for critiquing a piece of literature. But buried beneath all the twists and turns of terminology was a basic precept that applies to every classroom in every university (and probably, grandly, to every person on the planet) -- "otherness" makes people timid, cautious, and guarded. Ultimately, public discussion is about risk: it's about putting ideas out for public scrutiny and possible critique or challenge. When people do not know their possible audience they can be quite guarded about engaging others that they do not know, especially in courses like critical thinking or composition, where topics can be as personal and public as abortion, politics, and religion.

The easiest way I have found to reduce "otherness" and begin to develop a community is require that students learn the names of all the students in the class. In fact, the only test I ever give in any of my classes is a name test; the rest of the student work is process and developmentally oriented. Grades are determined by assessment Herein lies one of the first secrets of the transforming classroom and one of the best examples of what

real/authentic learning environments look and work like. When it comes to engaging in discussion in almost any situation, people will usually ask for someone's name before proceeding into any discussion that has the potential to reveal personal views about public issues. Yet, I can no longer count the number of classes I was a part of or I have observed where students went entire semesters without learning the name of the person sitting next to them. Once students learn each others names they feel much more open about possibly speaking out in class.

There are a number of name "games" instructors can use to facilitate learning student names. I found a few of these games essential, especially when I am teaching a class of 35 to 40 students, as is the case with the introduction to narrative course at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. The one I use most often is an index card game where I ask students to write down two facts about themselves. I encourage them to try to think of something that will help other members of the class remember them. Embarrassing (but not too embarrassing) moments or some daring do experience are often the best memory triggers. The cards remain anonymous and I collect them after everyone has finished and then redistribute them. I then ask the students to read what is on the card they drew and attempt to guess who their card refers to. Some very interesting educational things often occur during this game. In my English 105 class in the spring of 1995 one student admitted to streaking through his/her high school his/her senior year. After the class discovered which student it was, they never forgot Mike's name. Since he had taken a risk with them, most of the members of the class felt they could engage him because he had been open. By the next class, several people were talking with him before class began, establishing connections.

A variation on this game is to tell two truthful things and one lie. The lie can, of course, be as revealing as the truth because it may unsecret a secret wish or a personal subject the student would like to become part of a later class discussion that they would not like to approach directly. Katie, one of the students from my English 102/07 class Fall 1995, was rather clever about her card. She listed that she was heterosexual, lesbian, and a woman. The student reading the card deduced that the student who wrote the card had to be female or else there would have been two lies and one truth. Voila! Critical thinking at work on the very first day of the class. Not only that, but she also introduced the issue of homosexuality (her claim to be lesbian turned out to be her lie). Eventually this initial virus reached its peak when I invited a friend of mine to the class who identifies herself as bi-sexual to talk about political issues facing people with alternative sexuality (alternative from the laws, which essentially only recognize heterosexuality as "real" in any legal sense).

These exercises could seem frivolous, and the most skeptical of all people are usually the students. Another thing that may bother instructors is the fact that class size can often require that the exercise take up several class periods before it is completed. However, I have found that the full completion of this task sets the foundation for the community. Once the students come to understand that class will teach itself by having the members interact with themselves and the material of the course, the best potential of a pedagogy can be realized. The greatest number of students have the opportunity to become invested in the class because all of them are invited in by name. Another variation on this exercise involves gathering some item of jewelry, clothing, or something from the students and then redistributing those items to the class. Each class member then creates a story about the person it belongs to using the item as a catalyst. Whatever the method, the theory is sound ... find ways for the

class to become a community. Only through community can certain pedagogical experiences and values be taught and attained; only through community can the most authentic transformations occur.

Small Groups - Communities within Community:

Preparing for Collaboration

After the class has had the chance to learn everyone's name I break the students down into groups of four and five, depending on the total number of students in the class. [Small groups should be established early in the semester, within the first four or five classes. The small group gives the students people that they will eventually collaborate with on assigned projects. These are usually the people that the students get to know best. Also, my experience has led me to suggest and support the idea that small groups should be permanent throughout the semester, this allows the group to develop a personality and dynamic that makes collaboration easier as they move deeper into the course.] In my English 105, Spring 1996 class I decided to try something different with regard to the groups. Rather than randomly put students together I decided to get a few pieces of "psychological" information from them on note cards. The primary identification I wanted the students to make was with regard to the degree of extroversion and introversion they would use to describe themselves. There were four categories I used -- *pure extrovert*, someone who had no problem talking in front of the class and would likely be a voice the class would hear all semester; *extrovert trying to become less extroverted*, someone who was aware that s/he often dominated a class to such a degree that other students were left out and s/he wanted to resist talking as much (that would have been me); *introvert trying to become more extroverted*, usually the person who was waiting for a class to grab them and make them want to speak out; and finally *pure*

introvert, no matter how fascinating the material s/he would not speak out in class. When I formed the groups for the class I mixed the groups with the varying degrees of people so that groups all had ranges. Pure extroverts and introverts were the minority groups from the entire class group. What I hoped to insure in the groups was at least one to two people who would seek out and talk to the other members and help in developing the community of the group.

This experiment was successful and it gave the group members some expectations about how members would interact, who would naturally tend to lead discussion and who would need to be asked to participate in order to get his/her contribution. Along with the extroversion/introversion information, I asked students to identify their general outlook regarding life; these categories consisted of: romantic, idealistic, optimistic, pessimistic, and realist. I was not surprised to find a greater number of realists and pessimists among the overall group than any of the other categories combined. None of the categories were intended to be definitive, they were merely there to provide some loose frames for the students to use as identifications and for the groups to use for initial discussion. I also asked the students to briefly describe the type of student they thought they were. Many admitted to being procrastinators and needing to be prodded to get work done or turned in on time. Several admitted to being extremely conscientious about getting work done and attaining the highest grades possible. These little note cards really proved quite thought provoking.

Once groups were formed, I gave the students plenty of time to introduce themselves to the other members of the group. These groups would exist through the entire semester and the students needed to realize that they were responsible to the other members of their group. Part of their grade was actually to be determined by another member of the class.

One part of this course that you may find particularly difficult to navigate (or you may love most) is that there is a forced connection with other members of the class. Actually, the connection is not so much forced as it is going to be made explicit. Generally, you are connected to the rest of the class via a grade curve system that sets up one of your classmates as the standard by which the rest of you have to perform ... surprise, just when you thought your efforts alone determine your grade it is really the efforts of the best students that do. Well, instead of that nasty little "bell curve" trick, I'm actually going to make your individual efforts more pronounced by making you more aware of your responsibility to other members of this particular class community. The primary assessment of your grade (at least 90%) will not be based on someone else's skill level; each of you is at a different level in your thinking, writing, and social abilities. I will try to respect that. In other words, the person with weak grammar skills stands just as good a chance of making an A as someone with strong grammar skills if they excel in class participation or their thinking in their writing, which is often the case. Plenty of students who disagree with "my way of thinking" have made A's because they have developed well their way of thinking. What will be explicit about your connection to other students in the class is your partial (albeit small) responsibility to help your fellow classmates get an A on a portion of their grade (i.e., the group work).

This will require you to get to know your classmates, especially your group members. It may require you to get together with these people sometime out of class to complete a project. Trust me, it will be a valuable experience for you to make these connections ... drum roll please ... it will improve you as a human being. If you cannot handle or do not want this responsibility, drop the course.

From "The Sales Pitch" Handout, Spring 1996, English 105

Forming the groups early and keeping the members of the groups constant gave the students the opportunity to get know a few members of the class on a level deeper than the ones that the open discussion and the conference notebook produced. One of the byproducts of these long term groups has been a number of new friendships that lead to new roommate situations for the next semester. From my English 105, Spring 1996 class, three young women who met through my class, Becky, Keely and Molly, decided to become roommates and were looking for an apartment together by the end of the course. Something of this sort cannot happen when students do not know each other's names. Not only that, but they were

beginning a new narrative in their lives from the narrative of the course. The course did not just teach narrative; it created it as well.

One "real world" phenomenon that group work and groups develop has to do with the interconnectedness of most activities, which rely on all participants in the system to fulfill roles. In the business world, which often functions as the antithesis and gauge for academia (in the minds of students at the least, and maybe the general public at the most), a group project forces connections among members and distributes responsibility. Group work becomes another way of increasing investment in the work, especially when the success of the work depends on interdependency. This method of work always carries a high risk of failure because one or more members of the group could fail to complete the work; however, successful groups can produce work far beyond its best and/or brightest member.

English 102 (Critical Thinking) and English 105 (Introduction to Narrative): Identifying the Students of Introductory Courses

Both English 102 and English 105 fulfill general college requirements at UNCG, but they are not required courses. Even English majors are not required to take these courses. However, since they fulfill the logic requirement and an American literature requirement respectively, most UNCG students end up taking them at some point in their career. Because the courses function as satellites to the larger curriculum, they really do not have well defined agendas; they are left open to be developed by the instructor in his/her own fashion. One instructor may decide to teach Aristotle's topoi, another may focus on feminist issues, or another on critical literature as the basis for an English 102 course. Basically, all that is required of the instructor of the critical thinking course is to have a reader and a logic text (at the time that I taught it was Edward Corbett's Elements of Reasoning). The English 105

class is even more open (in terms of university expectations), but generally instructors limit it to an introduction to traditional narrative texts -- novels, short stories, and poetry.

My greatest concern for teaching both of these courses was to try to identify the essential transformation that each course should strive for in the process of the actualization of the class, and how that goal would be modified and shaped by the students at UNCG. Every university has character; through all the complexity and nuance, there are some general ways of thinking about and describing UNCG students. Most UNCG students were not the academically focused students of their high schools. Instead, the UNCG population tends to be composed of local Greensboro high school graduates, commuting students from the surrounding areas, older returning students (of which I have had at least one to three in each of the course I have taught over my four years at UNCG), and students working and attending school (non-scholarship or not supported by parents). The community of UNCG is rather diverse in terms of age, race, academic experience[2], and external/non academic responsibility (i.e., a lot of students work and go to college; some work full 40 hour weeks and many work 20 to 30 hours). Also, in my English 105 Spring 1996 class I had four parents. Suffice it to say that for a class at UNCG to transform a student, it has to be capable of speaking broadly and deeply to a potentially diverse student body. If instructors do not

[2] By academic experience I mean that students who attend UNCG are often students that may or may not have been part of the Advanced Placement or Honors classes. Being a good student means being "good" at school and its culture. AP courses are designed to help students develop a better understanding of the culture of academic study. A vast majority of students attending UNCG are often not as "savvy" as their Duke and Carolina counterparts or they did not have the time, inclination, support, or whatever to develop that culture to a high degree. Hence the requirement differences in a Duke and UNCG when it comes to test scores and grade point averages. The general student coming out of high school and into UNCG is likely arriving because of the cost to attend the institution, that they could not get in at Chapel Hill (many of the students I have taught failed to get in at Chapel Hill, but hoped to transfer there if their grades were high enough), or that they want or need to stay close to home. For these and other reasons, UNCG has a peculiar character to its student population, one that often translates into a general pragmatic philosophy about their education.

take the time to consider the students' struggles, the students will not take the time to learn the material that the instructors hope will aid the students in transforming themselves. Creating a center from which to develop a course that is interactive in the learning of the material can be the initial challenge, but theorists like Berthoff, Vygotsky, Friere, Elbow, Graff, Rushkoff, Anderson and Smith helped unlock the meta theory one needs to negotiate even the most diverse learning situation.

[Locating the type of student that comes to these classes tremendously helped in thinking about the pedagogy that would be needed to teach them successfully. Since most of the students attending these courses are doing so to fulfill a requirement, they form a group that stretches teaching theory to its limits. If an instructor can successfully draw in the students that approach these courses with a hesitant or even somewhat resistant mindset, then s/he can expect that s/he has expanded the boundaries of the class to include the most students. The name game and small groups begin this process in very practical ways. The next framing exercise involves moving their minds into a place where they can feel included. For my classes that meant introducing the students to the idea of methodological belief.]

"Life is X-rated; it is not rated R." Ice-T – rapper, songwriter, actor:

Preparing the Mind to Open, Preparing the Mind for Self-Awareness

This quote is particularly appropriate for the approach that I have to educating in a transforming classroom because the sentiment of it acknowledges that much of what critical thinking and narrative engages in their particular formats can be challenging, threatening, and even dangerous, material, like life, in need of editing. However, to approach a class in such a way requires a great deal of preparation and a strong community foundation, [the very things that should start taking form after learning names and establishing small groups.] One of the

best theoretical models to introduce at the beginning of each course I teach is Peter Elbow's concept, methodological belief. In Embracing Contraries Elbow argues that people are very good at playing the doubting game, but very poor at playing the believing game. Yet, at the heart of a transforming classroom is the believing game, a game of risk. Each class I teach begins immediately with a presentation of Elbow's idea because it honestly and broadly sets out the parameters of the class. As I have often told students in the critical thinking courses, nothing is beyond thoughtful critique ... not the Bible, not heterosexual marriages/relationships, street signs, normalcy, etc. But then again thoughtful critique is far more than simply expressing one's opinion and being done with it; thoughtful critique is listening and believing what another person says or writes, taking those ideas in, and then thinking critically about them ... working from the inside and the outside at one and the same time. To get inside an idea, one has to practice methodological belief. Elbow describes methodological belief as the "rhetoric of experience." (265) Of all the things hard to doubt, perhaps the hardest is someone's experience, probably because experience for a person is intimately connected to his/her feelings and perceptions. It borders on being almost absurd to tell someone who did not enjoy a book or movie that s/he is mistaken in his/her experience. The person could be mistaken about information in the text or movie, but that would not change their experience as it happened (though it may change their reflection about the experience if the information is corrected later).

Getting students to risk believing takes some thoughtful work because they "instinctively" realize that believing puts the "original self" described in chapter 3 at risk. As Elbow puts it, "The idea of methodological belief -- trying to believe many views -- may arouse our natural fear of being invaded, polluted, or forced to swallow." (264) In order to

reduce this fear Elbow suggests making believing methodological, where "method ... doesn't tell us how to make final decisions, it only tells us what preparatory activities or processes to go through before entering the world of full consequences." (268) Because I agree with Elbow, especially regarding "full consequences," I spend some additional class periods introducing the students to the ideas of the course before embarking on the actual material of the course. A sound ideological foundation must be in place to reduce the chance that students will become "secret agents" and fail to add their authentic voice to the class community. To "shake" them into awareness of this method I take the time to explain my beliefs as part and parcel of the group of ideas that will probably require some methodological belief on the part of the students (see handout below). By placing myself in the community rather than above the community (or outside), I make a promise to them to engage in believing them as much as I ask them to believe me. I even speak explicitly about the risk in believing to let them know that I understand how disconcerting it can be to try to believe in something that seems quite foreign to them. As I plan to demonstrate though, putting the method into action opens the way for many tranforming actions to take place, not only in the students' writing and thinking, but in their ability to experience (see the following sections on guest speakers and field trips).

Here is a sample write up given to my Introduction to Narrative class (English 105) in the Spring of 1996:

The Sales Pitch

I consider it very important to make students aware of the type of course they are taking so that they do not get blindsided. This course is not required, but it does fulfill a requirement. This factoid means that you ***choose*** *to be in this course and you are therefore choosing to accept the theory constructions that undergird this course. One of the first elements of the course is the understanding that narrative often deals with serious and controversial themes like what to believe in, racism, human sexuality,*

alternative lifestyles, violence, philosophy etc. If you think you may be uncomfortable with some subjects or have trouble discussing them openly, then you should drop from this course and take another section or another course that fulfills the same requirement. I like a lot of real life in my classes and real life is often messy, intrusive, chaotic, and challenging. But then again, forays into those areas are the very experiences that are the most interesting. To help make discussion accessible for everyone, we will be practicing something Peter Elbow terms ***methodological belief****. This practice in the classroom requires of each of us ... me, you, and everyone else ... to* ***sincerely try to believe*** *what someone says before we begin to doubt it.*

Here's a test run. I am an atheist; I do not believe in any type of "higher power." If you instantly disagree with my position and feel that my choice of belief makes me an unreliable source of information, you can discount anything I have further to say. If you do, you will not be practicing methodological belief. Here is the important aspect of methodological belief as a type of thinking. It does not ask that you discard your own beliefs in order to listen to what I have to say, but to consider that my beliefs are valid and worth hearing (just as I will consider yours to be) and to think about them along side your own beliefs. Only in that way can authentic discussion begin to take place among members of a community that is diverse and multi-cultural. You will quickly discover from your reading and class discussion that many people do not share the same position as you and that they can function quite well from their alternative position. As a result, they will tell narratives in a different and (if you are open) potentially interesting way.

I also make a point of explaining to students that methodological belief does not require that they discard their belief systems, but they will have to suspend them long enough to consider other systems as viable. "Suspended Disbelief" when reading a fantasy novel or watching and science fiction movie employs two techniques at one and the same time ... ignoring what one's belief system identifies as impossible, wrong or highly improbable and then believing that the another idea or belief is possible, even right, and quite likely. Getting one's mind to function in this "space" also encourages and opens the thinker up to critique about his/her own system of belief from within. The truly risky part of opening one's mind in such a way is the very real possibility of transformation out of one position and into another. Of course,

the thinker who returns to his/her original position often does so with greater understanding about why s/he holds such and such belief and why it is most appropriate for him/her.

The Conference Notebook - Enlarging the Community of Voices:

Insuring Complete Community Interaction

The next idea to consider for framing an actual Transforming Classroom is how to open the most "space" for the most student voices, how to create the opportunity for complete community interaction. While it is possible to reduce "otherness" by getting students to learn each others' names, it in no way insures discourse among all the students in the class. Some students never feel comfortable speaking in front of a group of people no matter how well they know them. Once again, I have stumbled across one of those simplified generalizations that has a considerable degree of truth in the classroom -- some students are extroverts and some are introverts. No matter how interesting the material of the class or how well that material connects with an introverted student's interest; s/he will not feel comfortable speaking in class. This bit of knowledge was driven home to me when I required students to have a minimum number of participations during class over a semester and several students were more than prepared to let their grade suffer to avoid speaking in class. I realized that a segment of the class was left with no way to participate in the whole group experience of the class. They did develop relationships with their small group members but not the class as a whole. Fortunately a fellow graduate student, Anita Rose, introduced the idea of the conference notebook to me one day at the student gym. Basically, she used it as a repository for written work from the students about a certain day in class or ideas discussed in class. With the conference notebook more voices emerged in the discussion.

> *What I did notice was that many people are being more open about their writing. They are writing what they think, not what they think everyone else wants to read (including me to some extend). Where I noticed this the most was in Maureen's essays. In class Maureen is very quiet. If I would not be able to see her writing, then I would not know how she really felt. I would think that she was someone that never expressed her feelings or never gave into discussions. In her essays she provided the class with the idea of how she felt. For example, she said that she was burnt out with school, saying that she no longer cared about her classes, or going to them. That could be part of the reason why she is so quiet in class.*
>
> *Stacy Lowman, English 102-07 Fall 1996, entry #14*

By the very design of the course in which I required some degree of verbal participation I put all the introverted students at a disadvantage; what made the situation even more poignant was the fact that they did not have a place for their voice. This problem was solved when a colleague of mine, Anita Rose, told me about her conference notebook. Unlike journals, which are mostly a dialogue between the student and the instructor, the conference notebook is a writing forum much in the same vein that the classroom is a discussion forum.

The Conference Notebook – How it Works:

The conference notebook is a storehouse for student writing over the course of a semester. It is designed to be a place for public discussion in a written format[3]. To get the notebook started I usually ask the students to write a letter of introduction to their classmates or to write their expectations and thoughts regarding the course. Here is a sample design from one of my courses:

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[3] It is certainly possible for this type of conversation to occur through the internet and I even attempted to set up a conference notebook on-line called AeonFlux in the Fall of 1995 in my critical thinking classes. But the resources at UNCG were not yet able to handle this type of situation. Students encountered too many obstacles because they had to rely on campus computers to get the work done. Many of the students expressed frustration finding labs with computers available at times when they were on campus or problems with the system when it came to actually trying to send their work to AeonFlux. While most students did own computers with word processors, many did not own modems. The idea of internet conferencing has great potential so long as students have reasonable access to the system.

Philip Young
English 102 - 06 and 07
8.24.95 Entry #1

The conference notebook is designed to give you a forum for discussion of the class, reading for the class, and any ideas that you would like to share with your classmates. One thing that I can assure you is that class time will generally be too brief to cover all the discussion that the text and we as a community of thinkers will be likely to discuss. The conference notebook is a place for you to continue your thinking beyond class. There are some guidelines that I want to share with you. This is a place for you to express ideas and thoughts, to forward and support arguments that might come out of class discussion, the reading for the course, and experiences you have this semester that you may wish to share with your fellow students. Here are some of the DO's and DON'Ts. DON'T rehash class discussion or give a plot summary of readings. Assume that everyone was in class and heard the discussion and that any one can read the essay you might decide to write about. DO give your audience a place to hang their hat though. For example, let's say that I say something controversial that you wish to continue a discussion about because we did not finish talking about it or later you thought of a different way of thinking about it and you want to share it with your classmates (maybe even a week after we have talked about the issue). In that case you might begin by saying, "you know when Philip said that homosexuality is a political issue and a personal choice and that's one of the reasons its so much a part of the public debate and not just about a private choice, it made me think of..." The (...) should take up the rest of your response.

DO use fun fonts! **You'd be amazed at how different fonts create a "feeling" about what you are writing.** *Some fonts may even reveal something to the reader about your personality, much in the same way that someone might analyze your handwriting. If you would like to know more about how to use a windows program like this one to do fun stuff, then just let me know.* **If you already know how, I may ask you to share your knowledge with fellow students.** *DON'T use oversized font sizes unless you intend to make up for the difference by writing more than a page. A page of type like the one above will not count as a full amount unless you press on for 3 pages or so! Make sure to double space so that readers can read your work easily and so that I can respond with comments in the margin if I choose. I will usually challenge a point by asking you to clarify it more.*

Most of your work for the conference notebook with be generated from you own ideas and the discussion the class creates. I will, however, assign a few specific responses, probably asking you to think about your thinking with regard to the class or regarding a specific essay. If you have trouble coming up with ideas, you can always read an essay and write a response to it. Remember to use the essay as a starting point for your own thoughts; that's what I and your fellow students will find most interesting

any way. This is also a great forum for those of you who have trouble speaking in class.

Finally, remember to date and number your responses. The first one will be due Thursday, August 31.

Conference Notebook

The conference notebook is designed to foster community writing by having students write one page or more responses that are placed into a conference notebook on reserve in the library. Generally, I ask for three types of responses:

Assigned responses: These are entries that respond to a specific directive or question that I ask. For example, to get the notebook off and running I often ask students to write critical impressions of the first day of class -- my introduction to the course and their thoughts about the course as they initially understand it. Throughout the semester I will often as "What have your learned?" and communicate to them that I want an open answer (a real answer), even if it means them admitting that they don't have a clue about Berthoff triangle, but that they thought so-and-so had some neat ideas about religion in one of the discussion from class.

Free responses: These are open responses to class, the notebook, the text for the class, or new ideas and thoughts that might interest or pertain to the class.

Responses to the notebook itself: At least three responses have to be to the notebook itself. They can respond to a specific response or give general critique or thoughts about the notebook as a whole.

I usually present the notebook as an extension of the class because we often do not have time to cover all the ideas and thoughts students may come up with in a class time. Also, many times students and myself think of things to say after the class is over. This is the place to write those "man, I really should have said X or Y about that" thoughts as well as a place for students who have trouble speaking in class to have a place for their voice. I encourage students to keep in mind that the notebook is their forum. I may write comments (usually prodding them to think deeper), but I do not grade responses (the most I ever do is ask for a rewrite if I get plot summary). Within a couple of weeks you will have a student produced text that can be used to fuel discussion.

The conference notebook vs. the journal or the internet: My experience with journals is that they do not often reflect community discussion, but more a discussion between student and teacher (something I like at higher levels of

writing and in smaller classes). While the internet accomplishes much of the same task, with regard to the public aspect, there's still something to be said for hard copies and the feeling that you are dealing with a real person's work. The electronic environment "feels" different than the paper one. I actually use both.

Finally, the conference notebook supplants peer review and creates a real audience for students to respond to. Some very powerful discussions come out through the notebook. It is also a place to learn the issues that are important to students and ways to introduce students to important academic issues in such a way that they are "authentic" (in the Freiren sense), meaning that students will see ways to connect academic ideas to their personal and very real (life) concerns. Its always good to contribute to the notebook yourself -- as a participant.

Since I require responses each class period (T, Th) and two periods when teaching MWF, students are asked to do a type of writing that is both constant and consistent. I either use one large paper or no large paper. The idea behind the conference notebook is to have the students thinking all the time, not just the few nights before writing the "big" paper. There's a lot of chaos and a lot of progress. Also, the primary evaluation comes from seeing that the students learn to move away from plot summary into real thinking and see how other students respond as a real audience. In this way you "naturally" develop student thinking in critical areas such as logic, criteria, types of arguments, support evidence, and critique rather than teaching a "unit" on these things and hope it somehow fits into student lives.

What makes the conference notebook such a valuable aspect of the Transforming Classroom is the negotiation of private and public that it requires of the students. I encourage the students to understand that the richness of the notebook depends on them taking risks by revealing their thoughts about the class or subjects from class discussions, but that they temper their writing with the understanding that it will potentially be read by the entire class. Not only that, but class members may choose to respond specifically to something another member has said. The notebook allows the students to engage in further discussion with a real audience. Not only that, but the engagement can be dialectical.

> *I remember when we had to turn the assignment in about the response letters and I kept hoping that someone had responded to mine. I thought that would have been the coolest thing. Only Mike responded back to me, but at least one person found me interesting.*
> *Laura Linkous, English 105, Spring 1996*

The dialectical nature of the notebook encourages further conversation among the students in the class. Thus, when I engage in my "pedagogical function" as instructor by introducing topics for discussion around the material or agenda of the class, the students are more ready to speak to and engage the class as a whole about the material. One of those telling moments in a classroom when community begins to take hold usually occurs when students begin talking across the room with one another rather than just talking directly to me. Decentering elements of the class away from me helps facilitate authentic conversation among the students, which in turn encourages them to become engaged in the material of the course.

> *I can bet that if instead of asking everyone to write their introduction to the class, you asked them to present themselves to the class, we would have gotten a lot less out of them. I think that is one of the lessons learned in this class. If people are comfortable and in a safe environment, then narrative will flow more freely.*
> *Mike Genzel, English 105, Spring 1996*

Mike unlocks a subtle, but important difference between "presenting" and "introducing" in his above statement. When someone presents in a classroom, it is as if they are showing themselves as an object. This is especially true of the student who feels very uncomfortable speaking in front of a group. S/he wants the experience over with as quickly as possible. The written introductions allow the students a better opportunity to "represent" themselves as subjects. By writing a page or so introduction, the students have a greater chance to share themselves with each other and develop a "safe environment," where conversation and "narrative" will flow more freely. Transformation can only truly take place when students

feel invested in the course. Investment comes through authentic participation in the class with other members of the class, including the instructor. Authentic participation is both active and passive; so for full investment in the course to occur for each student, s/he must not only listen but talk (verbally or through writing). Essentially, that is what a Transforming Classroom strives to achieve -- student investment in the material (a community of voices all talking and listening to each other).

The Conference Notebook, Critical Thinking and Narrative, English 102/105 Fall 1995/Spring 1996:

Where the Ideas Begin to Transform, the Liquid in the Class

When I first began teaching the critical thinking course at UNCG, I required students to write a long paper arguing some issue they felt strongly about. I would require several drafts and expect the paper to be at least seven to ten pages in length. This approach was traditional and generally effective, but it was not optimal ... at least not as an introduction to critical thinking. I was envisioning critical thinking in a way that did not really take advantage of the classroom dynamic enough. One of my grand discoveries as a thinker about pedagogy was the rather obvious fact that a classroom is a situation that puts random people into a room together and introduces the possibility developing community out of that chaos. Not only that, but the material for a course seems to most successfully "stick" to student brains if it passes to them through community activity.[4] What better way to generate and demonstrate critical thinking than to emphasize the issue of community as a central "problem" for the class.

[4] Other forms of community that I will talk about will include small and large group work, field trips and guest speakers.

Douglas Rushkoff argues that the datasphere, which is composed of all data transmitting and receiving organisms and devices, is very much alive. As part of it's living "nature," it must contend with viruses, protein shells containing genetic code that attempt to attach to cells in order to deposit their genetic code and transform the cells. In the datasphere a virus does not contain genetic code, but memes -- ideological code. (10) Memes "infiltrate" existing cells of part of the datasphere organism, like business, social relationship, education, etc. and attempt to transform the cells with their ideological code. Sometimes the viral shell itself can become a meme if it becomes large enough to operate outside of a particular context. Rushkoff describes such a event with regard to the image of Madonna. "By being able to spread independently of a particular context [a singer in the music industry to the movie industry or popular culture icon], Madonna becomes more than a virus generator. Her image *is* the shell of the virus." (144) Viruses constantly force any system to deal with complexity and therein lies their benefit and value, if handled properly. The Transforming Classroom is particularly virulent in the way that Rushkoff describes in Media Virus because the shell acts as a meme itself while perpetuating memes within the shell that are likely to attempt to attach themselves to student thinking. Or, at least, I will attempt to expose the students to them and see which ones transform the students.

What makes Rushkoff's work counterintuitive is his positive regard for the virus and its role in transforming the datasphere. When, where, and how viruses arise tell all sorts of things about the immune system of the organism, where its strengths and weaknesses are. The classroom acts as a "safe environment" to test a students' immune systems and help them develop resistance to "bad viruses" (bad ideas like racism) or use viruses to induce change in positive ways (the idea of equality would be a virus to a racist). Methodological belief

intertwines nicely with this concept because believing in a methodological way is similar to exposing oneself to a virus in order to test one's immune system. Sometimes the immune system becomes stronger by being infected by the virus and changed in some degree. Complete resistance to the virus after being fully exposed to it may even force a change in the virus. If it is allowed to enter the system and then it is rejected, it could be changed by the genetic/ideological material of the system. Through such interaction, not only are students transformed by instructors, but instructors are transformed by the students. With such an idea in mind it is easy to understand why making the classroom/the shell a meme is as valuable as the memes within the classroom. The open dialectic of such a situation led me to changes in the way I developed the course.

I decided to apply a different strategy with regard to the written requirements of the course. One thing I have discovered as a writer and thinker over the years is that one has to constantly nourish both of those skills to improve on them. When students are assigned large papers, they often write in spurts ... at the last minute just before the work is due. Thus, they never develop any "writing endurance" and they do not get enough practice in thinking and writing. So, rather than have them write one long "argumentative" paper, I decided to have them write two one page responses to the conference notebook every week. Since my critical thinking and narrative classes were taught every Tuesday and Thursday, they had to have a response every time they came to class. As the sample from this class that I included earlier in this chapter shows, they might respond to a specific assignment I had given, to another classmates response, or they might have a free write. This way the students had a great number of opportunities to engage in critical thinking and to practice writing. The initial critical activity they would face was how to regard one another.

With the freedom to have class discussions on topics of our choice, we will definitely make things interesting. People are so different from each other with different view, opinions, and ways of looking at things. This too can lead the class to be very emotional, very tense with the different views that each of us have. People intrigue me. I enjoy listening to them, hearing their viewpoints of how they did this or why they did that. Topics such as abortion, religion, and racism will definitely bring out certain feelings and emotions. I look forward to hearing how people view certain subjects such as these.

Brigit Populorum, English 102-06, Fall 1996, First Entry

The community aspect of the conference notebook can be quickly developed by having students respond to the first entry for their second entry. I encourage students to observe the growth of the notebook each time they go back to respond to it. The notebooks from my English 102 sections 6 and 7 classes consisted of over 800 pages of text by the end of the semester -- 20 entries times 20 students times 2 classes (actually one class had 27 students). The potential of this(ese) text(s) is tremendous; I even questioned the need for a reader at times. One could simply generate text upon text with a few initial entries from which students could begin dialogues. The writing seemed more "real" to the students since the writers of the entries were in the class with them, rather than professional writers published in a reader. The conference notebook, first and foremost, functions as a generative text. Once the first responses were turned in, they became the foundation for future responses.

Dear Fellow Classmates,

My name is Sari. I'm not in the habit of talking about myself, let alone write about myself. I'm an Arab, more specifically, a Palestinian. I've spent most of my life in the Middle East (Lebanon, Kuwait, Jordan, as well as Palestine), but now live in Sydney, Australia. War and revolution have a way of visiting the places I've lived, but I've come out unscathed emotionally or psychologically.

Sari Abdalla, English 105-09, Spring 1996

Actually, I'm finding it quite hard to respond to any single one of the scribed introductions. I love talking about religion ... what a topic. It has the ability to carry even the calmer people away on a wave of passion,

perhaps even rage. I share the opinion announced by a number of people ... conventional religions have a way of raising my eyebrow, to say the least.

Sari Abdalla, English 105.09, Spring 1996

Dear Fellow Classmates,

My name is Peter G. Bouldry. I live in the commercial mecca of Pfafftown (NC), home to professional wrestling and the annual Rust-n-Dust Tractor show. The afternoons and evenings are quiet except for the occasional dog barking. This is a definite change from the "college scene" I experienced at the University of Central Florida. The rapid paced Orlando lifestyle only wore me down with its fast food and frequent tourists. The Orlando experience does mark two distinct events in my life.

Peter Bouldry, English 105.09, Spring 1996

Dear Matt Bullard:

After reading your intro letter, I've decided to write you back (commenting on what was said). I can understand (or as the President says, "Feel your pain") when it comes to the issue of making friends at school. While doing my sentence at the University of Central Florida (1991-94), I experienced the same difficulties. The school population reached 20,000 · and I had an amusing Massachusetts accent to go along with my introverted tendencies.

Peter Bouldry, English 105.09, Spring 1996

I would ask students to periodically respond to the notebook as a whole or to individual entries that they found interesting. At least three or four times during the semester I would read some of the entries, usually of students who did not talk much in class, to start discussion for the day. Also, I asked the students to respond to certain questions or activities from class. Two such events included a day when I brought video games in to show narrative and another day when I brought in a deck of tarot cards. Then I asked students to think of narratives in unconventional places:

I didn't ever really think about it before, but I guess you can find narrative everywhere. I mean, if you can find it in a video game, I guess that proves you can find it anywhere. Another place I thought of to find narrative is in sports. I mean every game has an under dog that has a story. There are also the stories of the coaches, the players, the families of the players, etc.

Erica Hays, English 105-09, Spring 1996

I used to think that narrative was just a literary term that was limited to books and text. Now, from being in this class, I realize how narrow minded I had been. I never thought of tarot readings as a form of narrative. All narrative is made up of is a story. Each tarot card tells a story in itself, which is different in everyone's life.

Chad Haynes, English 105-09, Spring 1996

I think one of the best places to find narrative is at a party. Once everyone has a few beers in them the stories start to roll. People will talk about anything, the don't care who you are or even if you know them, the just want to talk to someone. Although, sometimes, the stories seem to be a little bit exaggerated, they are usually entertaining.

Becky Armbruster, English 105-09, Spring 1996

As I used the notebook more and more in the class, I found that the student writing could easily provide all the material for introductory courses in composition and critical thinking without having to have a reader. As a result, I have come to the conclusion that the university actually would do well to create a separate introductory course that focused on reading. I found the students far more interested in composition and critical thinking and making many more advances as writers the more I incorporated their work as part of their reading assignments.

As I was progressing through my graduate work and my teaching, one of the constant discourses among the graduates students revolved around "empowering the students." Much of this discourse came from the work of Paulo Friere, who described education as oppressive to many of those who were experiencing it as students, and Frank Smith, who observed through his work on reading that success in reading hinged on students feeling capable of completing the reading task (something aided by their prior knowledge and interest). Peter Elbow wrote with sobering practicality about the difficult task of attempting to negotiate the instructor's role as friendly guide and authoritative judge of student achievement. No matter who wrote about student/teacher interaction, the central degree of difference point revolved

around the notion that students, to some degree, have to feel empowered in the classroom. Often that empowerment only comes to the few students who do well on tests at very limited and specific times. The conference notebook is a way to empower the students optimally and constantly in the class, while also producing a wealth of material which an instructor can assess and evaluate.

Field Tripping: Transforming Through Experiencing

Transformation is an experience that comes through experience. Simple enough, but for a pedagogue transformation is something s/he attempts to induce by artificial means. By artificial, I do not mean false, but the use of artifices, techniques or methods. The most common of artifices in the university tends to be the lecture: it also happens to be one of the least effective unless the lecturer is a very skilled rhetorician, someone who knows how to transform an audience through monologue. It can certainly be done. One of my best and favorite professors, Dr. Randolph "Mac" Bulgin, was a rhetorician of the Demothesenes, Aristotle, Martin Luther King type. He could transform students by professing because he was an outstanding speaker, but not all professors had his gift. In fact, most do not. Even more pointedly, the attention span of students has been greatly shaped by media and entertainment that do not incline them to patient and directed focus on a speaker. The real life conditions of learning and absorbing information make lecturing a somewhat outmoded form for transmitting information. As well, instructors like students have personalities which are suited to teaching of certain sorts/styles. Mac's strength was as a lecturer. He often joked how "new fangled" teaching techniques just didn't wear well on him. But Mac was also an exception ... people didn't go to sleep or fill entire notebooks with doodles in his class either.

Most all of the ideas that I apply in my actual classes search out ways to induce the transformation process in students. Sometimes the transformations are positive; sometimes they are negative (but hopefully even those can turn out positive in an open learning environment). Ideally, they are memorable and lasting. Granted I am quite critical of lecture as a form of instruction, not because I do not think it can transform students, but because I have discovered that other methods lead to a higher degree of transformation with regard to today's student audience. As I have joked before, putting people to sleep is a transformation, just not in the "learning sense" I am suggesting. The conference notebook is one method which aided my students in transforming from autonomous individuals to a community. Field trips are a way of direct experiencing that can be used to pull theory out of abstraction and into the reality of the student's personal experience. Too often I have heard students and bar customers[5] discourse about college experience as something apart from the "real world." A field trip is an excursion into the "real" world with academic purpose in mind. A field trip is like crossing a threshold or building a bridge between what's "inside" the university and what's "outside."

Feminist Theory/Toys R Us Application:

Collaboration at Work

Much of the function of academia, what would be identified as academia's rhetoric or epistemology, revolves around the notion that things need to be reflected on as well as experienced. Sadly, large chunks of university education fail to maintain this dialectic and

[5] During my last year as a graduate student I worked as a bar manager at a local Greensboro restaurant. The bar is a great place for conversation, narrative, public opinion, and so on. I also had the opportunity to get plenty of feedback from people about education in general when I mentioned that I was an instructor at the University. A common thread in most all of those conversations was the "soft, fuzzy, unreal" world of the university vs. the "harsh, determined, real" world of life outside the university.

students spend hours and days and semesters reading and being lectured about things they are not experiencing or cannot anticipate experiencing. All the theory in the world will not do a person any good if the person has no opportunity to apply it. With this dialectic in mind I began searching for an experience that would be most helpful in understanding and bringing theory into the students' minds with relation to their real life experience. What sparked my interest in a project involving a visit to Toys R Us, a giant toy store located on one of Greensboro's most active thoroughfares, was my interest in popular culture and a number of insightful and critically poignant essays on toys and their relation to gender. One found in the reader, Signs of Life in America: Readings on Popular Culture for Writers from my 102-06/07 classes was "Our Barbies, Our Selves" by Emily Prager. The essay unveiled a lot of theory about women's attitude about body, accomplishment, and self-esteem as they related to the toys children, in this case girls, played with (specifically Barbie dolls). Before venturing to the toy store I asked the class to read this and other essays pertaining to toys -- Roland Barthes "Toys," Gary Engle "What Makes Superman So Darned American?," Andy MedHurst "Batman, Deviance, and Camp," and Geroge H. Lewis "From Common Dullness to Fleeting Wonder: The Manipulation of Cultural Meaning in the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles Saga."

The initial critical question I faced from the class was, "why are we going to a toy store?" And more importantly, "what has this got to do with critical thinking?" While most of the class had not been in a toy store for some time; they all had a lot of fond memories regarding visits to toy stores when they were children. But the frame I was more interested in exploring involved asking the class how many of them intended to have children one day. Both classes were unanimous about their intention to have children one day ... and a few

members already did have children. I told them that the field trip was designed to stretch their thinking with regard to gender as well as some of the critical thinking they would engage in one day as parents. The essays I asked them to read would hopefully provide them with examples of critical thinking as it could be applied to something they probably did not think needed to be critiqued. Toys, afterall, are toys and they are just a form of entertainment, right?!

Using the "parent" angle as the authentic inroad to the field trip, the class met at Toys R Us to engage in some group projects that would spark their critical thinking. Each group was given a specific task designed around the type of critical thinking feminist theory can potentially generate. One group, was asked to play the role of feminist parents and to seek out toys that would reflect the feminist agenda of their group. I did not give them a feminist agenda; I simply used the term and waited to see how the group would interpret it in terms of the project. Each group was composed of four or five members, two of the members were in charge of writing something for the conference notebook -- one was the Poet for the group, the notetaker, and one was the Seer, the evaluator. One person was in charge of making sure the group stayed on track and finished the assignment, the Leader, and one or two members were there to try to take the group astray, Jesters.[6] Since I left the term "feminist" open, it was very interesting to see what the group in charge of that project did in terms of selecting toys that fit their definition of the word ... and of actively disregarding certain toys as "not" feminist.

> *"Our group had different ideas about what to buy. Since we were shopping for a girl, dolls and kitchen sets initially came to mind. We figured with these types of toys, she would grow thinking that it is her place to be in the*

[6] I found that giving a certain group member the actual role of encouraging the group to digress, it forced the person in the role of the Leader to be more conscious of the task of keeping the group on track.

> *kitchen, and taking care of babies. For this reason, we didn't want to have too many 'girly' things, so we tried for more neutral gifts such as a science kit, and dolls (both male and female) that showed the anatomy of the body."*
> *Brigit Populorum (English 102-06) Poet*

One of the other groups was asked to think about the layout of the store in terms of gender and see what critical observations they could come up with. The group (Danielle, Erin and Rochelle) agreed that the front entrance of the store and the perimeters of the store seemed to be gender neutral or gender mixed "so that no one who entered the store would be turned off due to discrimination of any kind." (Danielle). But once they started to move through the store from right to left, they began to notice distinctive gender elements in the layout of the store.

> *From the way we walked in we reached the shelves on the right-hand side first. If you walk across the front of the store from right to left, the store basically moves from BOY to GIRL. The front section of each aisle is primarily set aside for older children and adults. The front sections located on the boys' side have the sporting goods and electronics; the front sections between the boys and girls' sides are where the bicycles are found; and finally, the front sections located on the girls' half of the store have all the baby supplies (furniture, accessories, etc.). The back sections of the aisles have a wide range of either boys or girls' toys (depending on the side of the store) that covers all the younger age groups.*
> *Danielle Wise (English 102-06) Poet*

They became critically conscious of how the layout of the store also played a role in guiding customers towards purchases. Interestingly, girls had to walk by aisles that contained boys' toys, but boys did not have to pass the aisles with Barbies or the entire aisle devoted to kitchen ware. One of the groups had a truly transformative experience when they were looking down the kitchen ware aisle at the same time a mother and her young son were there. They commented that they had heard the little boy say, "Mom why are we looking at this stuff, this is girls' stuff." I had presented the class with the argument that much of what

people understand as masculine and feminine are constructs of the culture and the toy store, like schools, contributes to the indoctrination of boys and girls into their "appropriate" cultures.

Another discovery that one of the groups felt they made had to do with which gender could "cross over" and play with another gender's toys.

> *"Keema, Monica and myself first discovered that it is easier for girls to play with boys' toys than it is for boys to play with girls' toys. We felt adults decide gender specification of toys. Toys such as cars, trucks and boats are slightly exclusive because adults are less likely to discriminate girls from playing with these toys. Power Rangers are highly exclusive because these toys are aimed more for boys."*
>
> *Kristin Smith (English 102-07) Poet*

The conversation among the entire class that emerged from this group's work revealed an odd dichotomy. Many of the female students remembered wanting to play with boys' toys -- trucks, remote control cars, trains, video games -- but none of the male students claimed that they ever wanted to play with girls' toys -- the baby dolls, kitchen ware or play houses. All of these groups encountered things in the toy store that sparked their critical thinking. They also discovered that a critical theory, in this case the loosely defined term "feminism," could help them focus their critical thinking in certain ways. For some members of the class, the feminist critique further reinforced their belief in gender distinctions and that those distinctions need to be maintained.

Ultimately the field trip was designed to spark conversation among the students, both in the class and in the conference notebook. It was an attempt to introduce them to a mass of information in a way that would begin their critical thinking process about that information. Many of the students readily admitted that they had not anticipated how much thought and care would need to go into selecting toys for their children. Many were surprised at how

aggressive toys for boys were and how "frivolous" some of the girls' toys were. While walking around with one group, members noted that the dolls for boys were known as "action figures" rather than dolls. Most of the action figures from the G.I. Joe line to Star Trek all had weapons of some sort and the costumes were in dark, rich tones rather than bright, pastels. One of the groups (all female) that critically explored the board game section was particularly disgusted with a board game called Dream Phone in which young girls made calls to find the perfect man. A couple of female members from another group were not to impressed with the Mall Shopping game. One member astutely noted in class conversation that what really bothered her was the fact that there were no comparable games for boys. Essentially the game was showing girls predetermined ways to talk to "win" the game and the young man, but they could find no game that did the same for young boys. No real definitive answers came out of the field trip, none were supposed to, but the introduction and melding of academia and the "real world" had been deeply successful.

Because of my success with the Toys R Us field trip, I decided to make some trip of some sort a staple of the Transforming Classroom. In my next course, English 105 in the Spring of 1996, I chose to take two field trips to help students support my central argument for the course -- narrative is everywhere. The first trip was to the video store to look at visual narrative. Each group was assigned a section of the store with very loose directives about how to put their group project together. The ambiguity of the assignment, which basically consisted of their exploring their group's particular genre (horror, action, comedy) and determining the films that best exemplified that genre (from either prior knowledge or their best guess reading and looking at box covers), was an attempt to get them to deal with the

difficult process of editing down the assignment to make it fit the one aspect of what was required that was not ambiguous -- a two page write-up.

Group Assignment 2

***All groups will be assigned a genre to explore.

You will be asked to break the genre down into possible subgenera.

for example: Horror includes subgenera like Vampire movies, psychological thrillers, gory tales, etc.

Your task:

Under the heading "Genres" list all the subgenera you can find. If you find movies that do not fit a subgenera, list them separately. Under each subgenera list all the movies you can find that fit the criteria of the subgenera in question; then rank the movies for possible narrative complexity. (1 being least complex to 5 being most complex)

note: if you have not seen the movie you will have to make an educated guess based on the box cover and the write-up on the back. Also, if one or more of your members have seen the movie, your group can consider their knowledge for the ranking. Annotate your reasons for considering whether a movie is complex or not ... what in the write-up or on the box cover or from your viewing would give you the impression that the movie is complex.

Genres:

Horror	Group 1
Science Fiction	Group 2
Fantasy	Group 3
Video Games	Group 4
Drama	Group 5
Comedy	Group 6
Foreign	Group 7
Children's	Group 8

Don't forget to search the New Release section for further titles.

Finally ... your group should decide on watching a movie that you all think might exemplify the genre through one of the subgenera. Be sure to pick a movie none of you have watched (if that is possible).

Happy Hunting

I had to consciously and continually resist attempts by the students to get me to narrow the assignment for them. I had to repeatedly tell the entire class that part of the assignment would be how each group put its work into a coherent write-up in two pages, knowing full well that some groups had over hundreds of videos in their sections. Some groups collaborated to create a write-up that was an organic product of all the minds involved and others pieced together individual interpretations of the assignment to get a holistic final product.

Perhaps the most valuable aspect of the assignment was its overwhelming quantity: the number of narratives, variations on narrative genre, the differences among group members as to what would be considered the best in a genre, and so on that could be found among the thousands of videos in the store. Admittedly, the assignment almost went beyond the zone of development the students were comfortable and capable of dealing with. By leaving the assignment "open" some rather interesting responses developed. One group (Kimberly, Laura, Adeatra, Darren, and Sari) decided to respond as if their group were writing from one organic mind. Their group had chosen to watch "The Abyss" from the Science Fiction section and they started their write-up by saying, "The Abyss: What KLADS thought of it." They wrote as one unified speaker blending their different opinions into the text.

The Abyss: What KLADS thought of it.

> One of the main purposes of science fiction concepts are meant to boggle the imagination, challenging it to perceive and formulate potentially possible pictures of the future or the unknown. This genre has explored everything from aliens to future worlds to the unknown in our present world. It is an all encompassing genre that includes approaches to film ranging from the humorous and the idiotic to the serious and suspenseful. But myself, as

KLADS, felt rather strongly that the movie that was watched, *The Abyss*, had many elements of humor, suspense, mind-teasing, as well as some tear jerking moments. *The Abyss* very much dealt with these ideas and was true to the sci. fi. genre of film.

The story line, to begin with, was wonderfully written and most every aspect of the movie was appealing. The acting of ALL the characters was very convincing, and in fact, carried me to the point where I was crying with them, yelling with them, and living with them. There were a few moments where I actually had to draw myself back and remind myself that it's a movie that I was watching. Perhaps the most effective two characters were Bud (played by Ed Harris) and Lindsay (Elizabeth Mastroantinio). The chemistry between the two was played out so well that it was very close to being tangible.

As for the special effects of this movie, its was way ahead of its time. I would even go as far to say that I would rank it close to the Star Wars Trilogy, another timeless sci. fi. epic. The different scenes throughout the movie, accompanied by the sound effects and pictures, were awesome; the sea craft and sea monster were pretty much real in my mind.

As for the movie's exploration of the unknown depths of the vast oceans here on Earth, it made the plot very close to home. True to the genre, it compelled me to think about what is really down there. It offered a parallel reality that offered different options, different consequences, different means by which to think about our own world and our own reality. For all we know there could be new species of life that we have yet to discover, or perhaps I would go as far to claim that their might even be extraterrestrial life forms lurking in its dark depths (it's hard to escape the atmosphere *The Abyss* puts you in). Definitely the whole tone of the movie carries over even after it is done. All of the sudden, I found myself carrying on conversation with either myself or others as the infinite number of possibilities in store for our world in the present, and definitely, the future.

As for specific scenes in the movie, one of the scenes that stood out and had me jumping up and down, yelling all the time was the scene where Bud was trying to bring his wife back to life after she had drown for him. The whole time they were doing CPR to her, I yelled and screamed advice.

On the whole, it is a hellish job for a director to capture the mood of this genre. If he/she is successful, then the product is a mind-boggling, mind-teasing result that makes one think more than anything else, and *The Abyss* is definitely a true sign of success.

Other groups were more traditional and pieced together individual thoughts about the project. Some groups had to approach the project this way because the group member schedules did not allow them to sit down and brainstorm together outside of class.

"Kiss of Death" *A Synopsis by: Kay, Pei Yi, Erica, Channing, and Eric

Our group chose the movie, "Kiss of Death." Due to the diverse schedules, we were unable to watch it together, which would have been a more enriching experience.

This movie was a drama. It starred Nicholas Cage, David Caruso, and Helen Hunt, to name a few. Although the performers are well known, this movie was not all that great. It was a typical movie about the injustice of the justice system and crime. It did have good points about how corrupt men are running our country on both sides.

One point that Pei Yi made about this movie is the broad use of violence and nudity. She found it very unnecessary and I agree. Although this may be needed to expand the vision of how gangsters live, it is overdone.

In addition to his above acting abilities (although not riveting), Erica note that Nicholas Cage looked extremely good in this movie -- several times. Again, I happen to agree with this statement, to the disgust of Eric, who was quite tired of the reference.

Our group initially categorized this movie as a political movie from the tidbits of information given on the box. But after experiencing the movie, we decided that it is a cross between a political movie depicting the harshness and basically unfair situations that the main character "Jimmy," played by David Caruso, finds himself entangled within, and a suspense thriller type of drama. We were shocked also at some of the movies we found in the drama section that our group thought was misplaced in the wrong category.

We were surprised to find a new release [Kiss of Death] that none of us had seen. It apparently had very little, if any, advertising. It did keep our interest and no one shut it off or fell asleep watching it. It was good movie to watch if there is nothing else on and you are bored. But as far as a great movie, I personally would recommend it for someone else to watch, although Erica does recommend it for anyone who likes Nicholas Cage.

Some groups chose to focus on the movie they watched, some on the visit to the store, some on the problems getting their group ideas together, and some attempted to cover as many aspects of the assignment as they could. I considered all of these responses valid. The "point" of the assignment was to try to get the students to understand that they could

construct the narrative of the group work in any fashion that they wished. I did not want them to "plug in" answers to a prescribed paradigm of my choosing; I wanted them to design the paradigm and "plug in" their own research. Many of them found this meta step of designing the paradigm particularly difficult as it put not only each individual member's editing skills to work, but the interpersonal editing skills of the group.

In the end, the field trips served the purpose of taking the academic experience into an environment that most of the students know in some directly personal way. Almost all of them rent videos regularly and all of them have rented a video several times in their lives. It was a common narrative experience from the "real world" that I attempted to enhance pedagogically by having the students think about the experience in "thoughtful" terms. The transformation that I hope is encouraged when academic thinking is applied to "everyday" experiences is one of enhancing or enriching the experience, like bringing more light to a partially lit room or staring at one of those posters with the hidden image in such a way that a person can see the image. Field trips, at the theoretical level of pedagogy, are about the business of bringing thinking and experiencing together at one and the same time in order to heighten the experience, make it better or more.

Guest Speakers, Bringing the "Outside" In:

Having a guest speaker applies the same theory behind a field trip, only in reverse. Finding authentic guest speakers works under the same meta-theory as every other aspect of the theory/practice discussed in this text. An authentic guest speaker is someone who connects with the class through the students' and instructor's personal/public lives. What I mean to suggest here is that guest speakers vary in degrees of difference, just like any other "method" or "technique" that has a general or abstract foundation, but requires a particular

application. The best guest speakers I found for the classes I taught came from the extended community of the students, the people the students knew. I was fortunate, in my English 102/06, to have a member of the class who felt comfortable enough with the environment created out of methodological belief to share her religious orientation with class; she was Wiccan[7]. Jennifer was kind enough to invite both her High Priest and High Priestess to come to the class and speak. Another member of the class, Brigette, who was about four months pregnant at the time, invited her mother to attend. And from my English 102/07 class, Rebecca invited her youth pastor to come and talk with the class. Each of these invitations emerged from discussions around religion and belief that were centerpieces of the class discussion. Another pool for authentic guest speakers could be found among those people who intersected with my personal and professional life. One of the most exciting class I have ever been apart of evolved out of a discussion that started on relationships, was complicated by introducing the idea of interracial relationships, and finally emerged when a student invited her ex-boyfriend from another university to come to talk to the class about their relationship and its difficulties and successes. They had remained close friends after their breakup and she had told him about the openness of the critical thinking class and invited him to come and speak, along with her, about their experience dating interracially. I met him just before the class and told him that the class had developed an open, but critical attitude and

[7] Wicca is an Pagan earth religion that predates Christianity by several thousand years. Like most religions it has varied and fragmented traditions, but it also has a general center that makes it different from other beliefs. Essential to Wiccan belief is a strong connection with the environment and worship of the God and Goddess. Because of its balanced and divisible emphasis on both the masculine and feminine aspects of deity, Wicca has, at one and the same time, patriarchal and matriarchal attitudes. Wiccans that are not solitary practitioners are members of a group called a Coven. A Coven traditionally consists of 13 or fewer members, with a High Priest and High Priestess sharing equal leadership of the Coven. Perhaps the best complete text on Wiccan traditions, ceremonies, and beliefs is Stewart and Janet Farrar's A Witches Bible Compleat

that I would pretty much leave it up to him and my student to lead and develop the discussion.

The discussion that developed that day in class was one of the finest examples of community, diversity, and transformation that has so far happened in one of my courses. Since students felt comfortable with the idea that they could express thoughts that reflected their values more so than some form of political correctness, many of the students challenged the relationship and criticized its failure as the appropriate result for a relationship that tried to cross racial boundaries. But what was more interesting was how my student and the young man responded by acknowledging that the relationship did fail, but not because of internal problems. They both defended the idea that what they felt and the elements of the actual relationship were ideal for any relationship ... positive regard for each other, love, support, and respect. But outside pressure was unrelenting, everybody else was concerned with "how things look" rather than what things meant. In fact both he and my student felt that some support from outside their relationship, from either family or the general society would have been all that was needed to help the relationship grow. But they both admitted that they had not developed enough individuality, economically or personally, away from their support networks to ignore the pressure that was being applied for them to separate. As is often the case in life, there are very small windows of time in which success can occur. This part of the conversation took the class into a discussion of appearance versus meaning. Appearance, the class admitted, still held a high and sometimes higher value than meaning, depending on the appearance and what norms it might be breaking.

The next critical "attack"[8] came in the form of asking the two why they had not gotten back together now that they had a better understanding of their situation. Again both responded by admitting that their lives had grown in very different directions and now the struggle would be a different one (as well as the original problem of acceptance, which would still have to be overcome). Many concepts about race and relationships were unveiled in the discussion that day. While most students understood and agreed, in the abstract, that love and respect *should* be the most important element in any relationship, they could not deny that race, sexual preference, and class shaped their view of the ideal relationship. In most cases an ideal relationship was heterosexual, class equal, and racially identical paradigms in the minds of the students. My student and the young man came face to face with the doublespeak that is often embedded in the rhetoric of political correctness. Interracial relationships had often been discussions within their family and cultural groups and their parents and friends all agreed that the "good relationship" value was the most important. To reinforce this idea the family and friends "claimed" open mindedness to interracial couples or friends dating interracially, but when the person was the actual son or daughter, other prejudices and "realities" came into play. Most importantly, the visit by the young man brought the abstract notion of interracial dating/relationships and the cultural, political, and personal ramifications into intense focus. Many students afterwards admitted that they had greater respect for people who could maintain a relationship under such adverse conditions. Some held onto the idea that the failure of the relationship was "for the best," but no voice was silenced. Ultimately, the community of the class began to understand how

[8] "Attack" is the appropriate word. Many students opposed interracial relationships, especially ones that involved markedly different races, in this case black and Caucasian. An interesting degree of difference point emerged on this issue as well. Some interracial relationships were not as "offensive" because the racial differences did not appear as "stark."

difficult and complicated honest communication among diverse people can often be when situations put normative standards to the test.

Because I had such a positive experience from this guest speaker in my critical thinking class in the Fall of 1994, I decided to make a conscious effort to invite the students to bring speakers into the class. In the following semester, Fall 1995, I was teaching critical thinking again (English 102). Near the beginning of the semester, about a month into the course, discussion centered around relationships and their variations. The class began to talk about the political nature of sexuality when the discussion moved into discourse about gay and lesbian marriages. Unlike my class from the previous fall, in which a couple of students admitted to interracial dating, none of the students in either of my English 102 courses acknowledged that they were involved in same sex relationships. However, the students had some rather strongly determined feelings about the subject of same sex dating, as well as a number of stereotypical opinions. Certainly most people would like to consider sexuality a private issue in theory, but there are far too many people in public roles who bring it forward into the discourse. Whether it is the President's infidelities or gay marriages, sexuality is very much a part of the public discussion. After a couple of class discussions I decided to invite a friend of mine from Chapel Hill to come and talk with my class.

I chose not to prepare the class for my friend's visit because some experiences are better when they are allowed to unravel dynamically in the present moment. I always find it useful to put my disclaimer, "anything goes," into action at least a couple times in class to stretch the critical thinking zones of my students' proximal development. My friend happened to have a rather public and political attitude about sexuality in general and the way public and political figures interpreted and wanted to define her sexuality (as a concept) in

particular. While not every one chooses to label themselves, most people either accept, deny or perpetuate certain labels in certain areas of their lives. Wendy not only acknowledges her bi-sexuality, but was and is quite willing to discuss what her particular label means to others in a public/political sense. Another reason I asked Wendy to attend the class had to do with certain stereotypical attitudes held by some of the students that needed challenging. Many of them perceived gay/bi-sexual men as effeminate and gay/bi-sexual women as masculine. As it turns out, and much to Wendy's aggravation as a feminist sometimes, she is genetically predisposed with a body and face suited for beer commercials and bathing suit editions of Sports Illustrated. I suspected that many of the students would be "surprised" to discover that Wendy was bi-sexual; afterall, she looks so "heterosexual."

Since it usually takes class a few minutes to settle in, Wendy and I came into the room before most of the other students. I chatted with the students as they arrived and purposely held off introducing Wendy until all the students had arrived. Before class Wendy and I had discussed how I would introduce her or if she wanted to introduce herself. We decided that I would provide the introduction and then see where the discussion went. So, as part of the introduction, I mentioned that since the class had been engaged in discussions of sexuality and public discourse I thought it might be interesting to talk with someone on or near the "front-line" of that discourse. This is my friend Wendy and she is bi-sexual. As I had anticipated and found out in the journal entries that followed the class, many of the students were not only surprised by the way the introduction was presented, but by the fact that Wendy was indeed bi-sexual:

James Clubbs (English 102-06):

"When I first walked into the classroom, I looked around and noticed a new face in our 'circle.' I admit, I noticed her right away -- she was very, very attractive. ... [I figured] that she was a speaker, invited by

Philip, to talk to us about a particular topic. No sooner than my thought processes were just getting into gear (it being 9:30 in the morning) did I, as well as the entire class find out just who this stranger was -- did I mention how attractive she was (and is ...). Then came the shock, at least to my point of view. This person was introduced properly by Philip, first by name and then by her sexuality; a bi-sexual. I was shocked. I am surprised someone didn't have to tell me to pick up my chin when it hit the ground."

Ashley Dees (English 102-06):
"When Philip's friend was introduced as a bisexual, I was somewhat surprised. She appeared to fit my image of a normal college student."

Valerie Garner (English 102-06):
"Class was very interesting on Tuesday. I enjoyed hearing all the views of my classmates about bisexual women. Maybe I may stereotype, but I never would have thought Philip's friend from Chapel Hill was bisexual. I was really surprised when he, Philip, introduced her to the class."

Brigit Populorum (English 102-06):
"When I came into class on Tuesday, the 19th, I saw Wendy sitting next to Philip. I was sitting beside Leslie, and we were wondering who she was. ... When Philip said, 'O.K., everybody, this Wendy, and she is bisexual,' I was surprised, to say the very least. I was shocked, to be more accurate. Wendy was attractive, I would say, and I didn't expect her to have the introduction that she did."

Scott Yokeley (English 102-07):
"One thing that will probably stick in my mind for as long as I live will be [the knowledge experience] that beautiful women can also be gay or bi-sexual. I really try hard not to stereotype, but I guess that I had a strong pre-conceived idea about what lesbians look like. [Wendy even described my stereotypical notion of lesbians] as having short hair and a manly type build.

The next shock, which soon followed the first, was the even more confusing fact that Wendy was married to a heterosexual man who knew about her sexuality and had to accept the situation that she would probably maintain intimate relations with women after her marriage. You could say that the students got shot through a proverbial zone of proximal development

canon by coming face to face with the "alternative realities" Wendy's "context" presented ... in terms of sexuality, relationships, and finally marriage.

> *Katie Kirs (English 102-07):*
> *When I first hear that Wendy was a bisexual I didn't think too much of it. But when said that she was married to a straight man, I was shocked. I had a hard time understanding why she would want to be married when she was interested in women also and did not plan to give up that part of her life."*
>
> *Adam Miller (English 102-06):*
> *When Philip told us that his friend Wendy, who is bisexual, is married to a heterosexual man, I was kind of taken by surprise. ... Just the fact that Wendy is bisexual is probably something that most of us have dealt with before, some more than others I am sure. However, when we throw in the fact that Wendy is married to a man, and a heterosexual man at that, it throws a sort of twist into the discussion and to our thoughts and feelings on the discussion."*
>
> *Kristen Smith (English 102-07):*
> *When listening to the speaker [Wendy]. I was overwhelmed with the way she and her husband perceived marriage. I asked myself, 'How are the two able to deal with the fact that their mate may be involved with someone else? Are they ever worried the other may leave for someone else?' The only answer I could come up with involves an extreme amount of security and trust. They both must be very secure with themselves and with their marriage. it must take years of development and maturity to understand and have an open relationship."*

Classes like the one with Wendy present put methodological belief to the test quickly and deeply.

Much to my disappointment, Wendy's visit to my first class "failed." And it failed because the road to bad pedagogy, like the road to hell, is paved with good intentions. Perhaps "failed" really misses the point; the first class did not achieve all the potential that Wendy's visit contained, whereas the second class did. Not only did Wendy and I realize this directly after the first class was finished, but so did the students, and they said so in their notebook entries after the class. The "good intention" trap I had fallen into was to determine

to reach a certain point in the discussion rather than allow for organic development. Since I wanted the conversation to reach the point at which the class would discuss the "politics of sexuality in America," I steered conversation in a direction that actually kept the class from engaging Wendy. Many of the students were reasonably bothered by this and, as good critical thinkers, said so:

> *Ashley Dees (English 102-06):*
> *I was curious to understand [Wendy's] feelings about her sexuality. I was however disappointed in the way the conversation went because I would have liked to hear a little more about how she was treated by both the straight and gay communities."*
>
> *Brigit Populorum (English 102-06):*
> *[Wendy] evidently came into our class to talk to us about her stand on things, but she didn't really have a chance to talk ... at all. I even heard people saying after class that she had come all the way from Chapel Hill, and she didn't get anything said ..."*

Basically, the transforming effect of Wendy's visit to the first class was considerably less than the effect she had on the second class. As she and I talked on our way to the next class, we realized that I really needed to turn the class over to the students and let her field questions from them. In the first class I had forgotten one my basic pedagogical theories -- people have to move ahead by connecting zones of development, trying to skip beyond a connecting zone stops the learning process. The students in the class, most of them anyway, needed to simply ask Wendy about her sexuality and other aspects of her life from the zone of their experience in relationships and sexuality. In my zeal to get to a discussion about the politics of sexuality going I short circuited that process, but I was glad to see the students critique me about my pedagogical blunder. I apologized to them and said I would do my best to get Wendy back for another class. Unfortunately that did not happen.

The next class was a pedagogical dream. I told Wendy on the way over that I was going to refrain from participating unless asked to do so by the students or by her. Literally I was going to turn the class over to her. She admitted that she was a bit intimidated by that idea in the first class, but she agreed that the class really needed to be able to deal directly with her for the full impact of the experience to benefit her and the students. We pretty much went through the same introduction routine and settled in to field questions. There was an initial silence as students attempted to both find the courage and the thoughtful way to ask questions of Wendy; one could see they were extremely curious, but they were also polite and did not want to offend Wendy. Finally, Erin Reedy broke the ice and asked a simple question of definition, "what do you mean when you say you are bi-sexual?" From there on out it was a transformative class field day. Many of the students attempted to apply their own confusion about alternative sexuality onto Wendy, but since her bi-sexuality is her lived experience she does not perceive herself as confused. She challenged student assumptions about their own heterosexuality by asking them in return why they would want to limit their sexual and intimate experience to only one gender. From her paradigm and the general paradigm of "more is better," she suggested that she had more opportunities for interesting experiences because her sexuality extended beyond just one gender.

Once on this line of discussion, it did not take long for one of the students to notice her wedding ring, a traditional heterosexual symbol if there ever was one. Class was off and running into another foray about constructed reality. Some of the students wanted desperately to "trap" Wendy in a logical fallacy of sorts with regard to a societal construct. How could Wendy be married to a heterosexual man and still have other, intimate relations with women. Somehow that seemed ontologically impossible to the students (Katie, Clarisa,

Terry, etc.). It would have been if Wendy accepted their definition of marriage, but she was living her own experience, one that kept some elements of the traditional marriage, but discarded others. What she retained was a commitment to her husband as the primary partner in her life and life relationships. She discarded the idea that such a commitment required that she disregard other potential intimate relationships that differed in degree to her marriage commitment. One student, Devin, was struck in a different way by the discussion; he realized that he had been trapped in a very traditional view of marriage and that he surprised himself for having that view. His epiphany was to see the constructed nature of marriage. Several students (including Kristen, who wrote about it a conference notebook freewrite) were impressed by Wendy's position, but admitted that that they would not be able to handle such an open relationship.

At the heart of the experience was not an attempt to convince students to become bi-sexual, but to give them a chance to see a "functioning reality" that was likely very different from their own. And believe me, many of the students during the class continued to have real trouble grasping the impact of what Wendy was describing as her experience in life. She was also going against certain stereotypes by being particularly articulate and in no way defensive, even when questions bordered on being a bit offensive. Wendy was able to see that even the potentially offensive questions emerged from innocence and lack of knowledge and not malice, which made it far easier for her to present her position rationally. It was the rationality in her rhetoric and her "appearance" that disarmed, even confused, and transformed many of the students. All and all a good day at the pedagogical office. In many ways, the fact that she could explain her marriage and sexuality in a "matter of fact, this is

how it is, what's everyone so surprised about" fashion really probably did more to transform the students than the meaning of what she was saying. The shell is the virus.

Asking Authentic Questions; Accepting Authentic Answers: Getting Students to Think about Their Thinking

One of my grand epiphanies about pedagogy came in one of those brief transcendental moments that usually occurs in some odd place at some odd time. Mine came about a year ago one night when I was bartending and talking with a customer about my field trips to Toys R Us. I realized, when the customer was asking what the purpose of the trip was, that taking students to an "natural" environment with an academic intention revealed one of the guiding principles of educating a person in the activity of critical thinking ... experiencing and thinking about the experience at one and the same time. I did not take the students to the toy store to buy toys, but to think about buying toys in critical ways, presumably in ways that they would likely "naturally" think about buying them one day as parents or aunts and uncles. This "double" thinking process is at the heart of transforming one's thinking. To most of the students the toy store was the toy store; a person bought toys there. But after the visit under academic conditions, looking through academic eyes, the toy store became a source of gender construction. The powerful transformation that is the ability to think about one's thinking is the key to the gates of wisdom and pedagogy. The moment of transformation where students can recognize their ability to think and think about their

thinking is the moment when the student becomes a pedagogue him/herself and capable of developing his/her own path for his/her own current and future learning.

One of the best ways I have found to attempt to jump start this process is by asking the student "authentic questions" with an eye towards "authentic answers." I tend to believe that critical thinking is something of a dormant gene in every student's DNA and pedagogues are there to find the right catalyst to release it. When that occurs the student becomes capable of "taking possession" of the class, the material, and college so that it becomes a real experience in their life experience that is *meaningful*, and not just something they are doing out of habit. What I have discovered is not so much the challenge of authentic questions, but accepting authentic answers. The critical thinking class was the perfect testing ground for a foray into the chaos of learning. I suspected that students learned a wealth of valuable things that were a result of their experience in the classroom and through the course discussions, texts, group work and so on, but were not what would be considered truly "academic." However, that did not mean that what they answered was not authentic. I remember the first time I asked students to tell me what they had learned in English 102 thus far (about three weeks into the semester). I was very careful to leave the question as open as possible for a very particular reason ... I wanted to see how the students decided to interpret the question. As I anticipated they asked me or presumed that I meant, "what have you learned academically" -- rules of logic, fancy terms, argument styles, etc. But that's not what I meant. I further elaborated by telling them that I wanted to know what they had learned that "stuck" to the ribs of their brains thus far. What did they know without going to a notebook (of course, they could not do that since I didn't let them take notes in class); what were they

already in possession of from the class that was real and authentic. The answers were most enlightening:

Jennifer Woodall:

[I have learned] to be open and honest about who and what you are; not to rag on the teacher or he'll pick on you in front of the whole class; not to be afraid to step on toes; not to be offended by having your toes stepped on; that your views on certain things (like religion) have an effect on your views about other things (homosexuals).

Chris Wall:

To start off with, learning the name of about 20 different people comes to mind. How I ever accomplished this I will never know. I am terrible when it comes to names. This has been great. I mean, how often does a teacher care if classmates actually know anything about each other?

Dannielle Wise:

7. I've learned that everybody can perceive the same object or statement differently. (For example, the "fast car"[9] that we discussed in class or how one person can say something and another can "misunderstand" it.[10]

8. I've become aware that society places a huge importance on gender, class, age, and race distinctions -- it has become obvious to me that society thrives on these distinctions. (I became aware of this through our experience at Toys R Us.)

Neal Townsend:

- *how to use e-mail*
- *that a lot can be done at 2:30 in the morning*
- *that there are alot of different fonts to use on the computers here at school*
- *that there is a reserve room in the library and where it is located*

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[9] Danielle is referring to a demonstration I use in class to show people how meaning is often open and so interpretations can easily vary regarding material that is heard or read. I ask the students to imagine a fast car in their mind. I then go around the room and ask for them to tell me specifically what they have imagined "carwise" and what color the car was. Granted I get a number of red Ferraris, but I also get Mustangs, Vipers, Corvettes, and RX-7s in green, white, black, and yellow.

[10] Here Danielle is referring to something I described as the "Field of Interpretation" -- that "space" between speaker and listener where intention and meaning either meet appropriately or diverge slightly or greatly. As long as she understood the meaning of what I was communicating, I was not too upset that she did not remember my exact terminology.

- the meanings of ... dialectic, methodological belief, metaphor, inclusion, exclusion, definition,
annotating, probability, assumption, ethnocentrism, field of interpretation.

Erin Proctor:

For this class to be an English class, I sure haven't learned much English. At least I don't think I have. Maybe I'm really learning it but just in a sneaky way so I don't realize it. But I have learned a lot of other things though. Stuff that I think is just as important, even more so, than English.

I learned that it is easier to keep up in class if you go every time. This is the only class that I have this semester that I haven't missed, and it is the only class that I don't feel the least behind in. It's also easier to make a good grade if you go every time. Ironically, I have to walk the furthest to this class over any others so it's strange to me that this is the one I've been to every time.

Have you learned anything this semester? Teachers still learn stuff right?

To get authentic answers like these and the ones other students[11] provided, an instructor has to create the "right" situation ("right" in Zen terms ... appropriate, fitting). This task of getting students to unlock their own thought processes requires a number of theories to be at work at one and the same time. First, there are no wrong answers. What the students learn is what they revealed to me. Some of the answers may seem "un-academic" in some purest academic sense, but the student who mentioned getting picked out in class for picking on me did apply critical thinking. And her interpretation of the situation *was* her experience: she did indeed learn what she claimed to learn. Second, learning occurs in many directions and in many degrees; what the students write about when not coerced by the idea of "getting it right" reveals their authentic experience and what they retain. Finally, even the most apparently obtuse response (perhaps the one about fonts) still shows that the student is aware that he learned it through an experience within the context of the class. They can think about

[11] see appendix for complete responses from other students

their thinking when asked "in the right way." It is the job of the pedagogue to find "the right way."

Each of the responses can be connected to various pieces of the theories that lead into the Transforming Classroom. Jennifer points out that authenticity is key to her learning experience, as she learned "to be open and honest about who and what you are." Allowing her Wiccan beliefs to enter the critical discussion of the class helped all the students actively participate in methodological belief. Chris touches upon ideas presented theoretically by Elbow and Smith when he points out how important it is for him and the other students to be recognized as unique individuals investing themselves in the course. Danielle noted how much of an impact taking the academic into the real world helped her understanding of the roles and effects of "gender, class, age, and race distinctions" and how "obvious" it was "that society thrives on these distinctions." Neal related the many practical experiences that he retained as part of his experience in the course and Erin learned a number of practical things about being a student, both students learned without the undue pressure of exams. Erin also takes a huge step towards owning her own learning by asking me if I have learned anything from the class. No longer am I seen as someone separated from her experience or she from mine. She has begun to see the intersubjective situation that is learning/teaching for the student and instructor.

Who Are They Anyway; Getting Students to Think about Their Standpoints:

Another task I have found invaluable in helping the students understand and navigate difference in a classroom community is one in which students pull their theories-of-the-world or their standpoints to the forefront of their thinking. All of us hold onto certain beliefs that guide our actions and discourse through life. Conscious awareness of these beliefs can help

in sharing those beliefs with a community and reduce misunderstanding. In the academy, instructors are or should be constantly about the business of making the agendas and beliefs that are relevant to their teaching common knowledge to students as well as help students do the same with their agendas and beliefs. This openness is valuable because it can help prevent the negative outcome that often occurs for students and instructors when agendas are hidden. Since, presumably, the instructor knows better, s/he is obligated to begin the discourse about agenda and belief to set the tone of the course. This idea becomes most clear when evaluating student papers. As I am quick to point out to students, I am often not their intended audience, but my professional role is to be able to assume the role of an intended audience when I am not.

The example I find most useful in my critical thinking class, where students are often writing papers to argue one position or another, regards arguments by authority where God, Jesus, or the Bible is the authority. Since I am not a Christian, there are many tenants, assumptions, and arguments that I do not consider valid from the beginning. A writer attempting to persuade me as his/her intended audience using certain arguments with those sources in mind would not be able to persuade me, by default. Sharing this knowledge with them does not mean that they cannot write a paper using those sources as authorities, but that they should realize that I am not their intended audience ... any more than they would be if I were to use decidedly non-Christian or counter Christian values to make my arguments. As a pedagogue it is most important for the students to understand that I do hold positions on issues of every sort and that I may try to persuade them to agree with me on those issues, but I also respect difference. For that reason superior work (A work) can often come to different conclusions than the ones I have reached based on differences in assumptions and agendas.

However, it is also important for the students to understand that with regard to any belief system there are accepted "rules of rhetoric" and those can be analyzed and judged by anyone regardless of belief. I may not share a Christian's faith, but a writer using Christian authorities follows certain rules of thinking that can be judged by a critical thinker, both Christian and non-Christian.

Whether universities and its instructors want to acknowledge religious belief as one of the many crucial factors that affect student learning or pedagogical instruction is really moot ... at least in terms of the presence of it in student/teacher thinking (it is always, already there). But it is far from moot when it comes to authentic learning. Belief is but one of hundreds of factors that affect how students learn and instructors teach. To establish a community that is truly interactive, members must be able to identify themselves for other members, even if it is to say that they don't know what they believe just yet. Students, however, can often amaze themselves with regard to the numerous beliefs they actually hold definitively and act on. One of my more "radical/liberal" students was rather surprised at his own blind acceptance regarding the construction of the institution of marriage, until Wendy's visit. Devon quite prided himself on his non-traditional views regarding most subjects, so it was an amusing epiphany to him to realize that he had always held non-critical, traditional views of marriage.

Belief and Personality

What one believes and the way in which one believes obviously affects how a person interprets and disseminates information and ideas. Vygotsky's research into the development of children through zones of proximal development reinforces the idea among many cognitive psychologists that personalities and beliefs develop into distinguishable categories:

> Unlike the development of instincts, thinking and behavior of adolescents are prompted not from within but from without, by the social milieu. The tasks with which society confronts an adolescent as he enters the cultural, professional, and civic world of adults undoubtedly become an important factor in the emergence of conceptual thinking. If the milieu presents no such tasks to the adolescent, makes no new demands on him, and does not stimulate his intellect by providing a sequence of new goals, his thinking fails to reach the highest stages, or reaches them with great delay. (T&L 108)

Vygotsky also proposes that cognitive development is *not* a linear process from one lower to one higher form of cognitive development. The process is both chaotic and orderly, sometimes moving ahead in one zone, but not another, sometimes moving back before moving ahead. As he points out, "Adolescence, therefore, less a period of completion than one of crisis and transition. The transitional character of adolescent thinking becomes especially evident when we observe the actual functioning of the newly acquired concepts. Experiments specially devised to study the adolescent's operations with concepts brings out, in the first place, a striking discrepancy between his ability to form concepts and his ability to define them. (T&L 141). Psychology has no shortage of writers dealing with the same meta concept in different ways, whether it is Kolberg's "Psychology of Moral Development," or Maslow's "Hierarchy of Needs," or Belenky's "Women's Ways of Knowing." Each of these thinkers, feeding directly or indirectly off of Piaget's landmark ideas of child development, agree that belief and personality can be essentialized in some degree and psychological context. In other words, human beings actively reify their own cognitive development to create ego boundaries in a wide range of cognitive areas. Vygotsky challenges Piaget by arguing that development is non-linear and multi-categorical; however, he does not contest the idea that "stages" exist in human psychological development and that some are higher than others. While much of the research of Maslow, Kohlberg, Piaget, Vygotsky, and Belenky remain active primarily in academic environs, similar, if simpler ideas have found a

way into the popular discourse through popular psychology. As various as the academic examples, popular psychology has a number of ways of helping the "average" person identify themselves cognitively as one type or another. The basic meta principle is the same, but some of the actual methods are quite creative. One fine example is The Goddess Within: A Guide to the Eternal Myths That Shape Women's Lives by Jennifer Barker Woolger and Roger J. Woolger, which uses Greek goddess archetypes to describe different personality types in women.

To help students think about and even identify their belief system(s) I have found that even the most basic popular psychology test can be quite useful for beginning a discourse about belief. These tests are often fun! On one of my many trips to visit my mother-in-law in Kannapolis, NC where I found that used bookstore, The Book Peddler, which carried new bookstore overstock at discount prices, I ran across a curious text by Hunter Lewis, A Question of Values: Six Ways We Make the Personal Choices That Shape Our Lives (also for a mere $3.00). The actual text used in a class is secondary to the idea of getting students to think about the ways they identify themselves. Admittedly some of the tests are potentially more interesting or eye-catching than others. In his work Lewis contends that there are essentially six large conceptual categories for belief; these are: Authority, Logic, Sense Experience, Emotion, Intuition, and "Science." People can draw on any one of all six at a given time depending on circumstances and contexts, but even so, generally, a person is guided by one to a greater degree than all others. According to Lewis' system, I'll be the first to admit that Authority is rather low on my list of beliefs when it comes to determining my choices. I have a healthy skepticism with regard to many types of authority.

Sense Experience and Logic have long been staples in my belief development, and I have been consciously trying to cultivate my intuition.

Lewis begins his work with a thoughtful question, "How do we construct a framework in which our most basic value choices can be defined, compared, contrasted, and evaluated?" He certainly believes that such a framework is always, already present in people, that the framework is complex and dynamic but still generally identifiable, and deeply embedded in a person's psychological identity through years and years of social/psychological construction. And since "construction" of some sort is involved, values can be categorized, thought about, and even consciously changed and manipulated ... especially if the thinker can see values at the meta level, which is what his work attempts to unveil. Whether or not Lewis has hit upon the "right" number of categories (maybe it should only be four or maybe ten), his text is a perfect catalyst for a critical thinking class. Almost any type of moral development or personality test can provide useful beginnings for discussion in a critical thinking or narrative class because humans tend to enjoy explorations of self. These tests tend to have such a strong draw because they attempt to reduce chaos for the person. It is a rare person who is comfortable with ambiguity about the self or the world. The hook for many tests like the one Lewis provides is the underlying premise that human moral structures can be grounded, explained, and studied. An instructor can use these popular tests to get the students to find another inroad to thinking about their thinking. Lewis provides a shorthand test to help the reader determine the most likely or most prevalent category of his/her belief system.

> As a kind of shorthand, imagine that you have a serious personal issue on your mind, such as the choice of a career. Whom would you choose to confide in and seek counsel from?

1. A friendly, compassionate and wise Catholic priest, offering ... (or) a traditional Protestant minister, (or) an Orthodox Jewish rabbi, offering ....

[This choice represents] faith in [a] higher *authority* ...

2. A professor of philosophy who befriended you in college and seemed immensely learned and wise, offering ...

[This choice represents] an ability to think through the problem in a structured and highly *logical* way

3. Another professor from college, this time a professor of history and literature, also a good friend and mentor, also immensely learned and wise, offering ...

[This choice represents] his own personal sense of *experience*, plus the accumulated *experience* of Western culture as contained in its greatest works of history and literature.

4. A family member or very close friend, offering ...

[This choice represents] strong *emotional* empathy from a member of your most immediate group or "tribe"

5. A Hindu, Buddhist, or "New Age" guru, a person of immense calm, poise, equilibrium, and unspoken wisdom, offering ...

[This choice represents] meditation and other tools designed to unlock your own inner powers of *intuition*, your own inner voice, your own inner guru

6. A widely respected psychiatrist, offering ...

[This choice represents] a systematic appraisal based on *social science* methods and principles

You might reasonably reply that your choice would depend on the issue: one person for career counseling, another for marriage counseling, and so on. But if you could choose only one advisor for *all* personal issues, which would you choose?

Most of the students considered the task of choosing only one value system particularly difficult, and some even actively resisted the reduction of their values into one system.

Chris Wall (English 102-06):

"After reading the handout on the several ways in which to choose values, I noticed several flaws. If you look and think about the six methods presented, though they are very clear cut in description, these methods are not always used exclusively. In other words, 99% of the time a person will use a combination of these methods to account for their decision. Also, the idea of choosing only one counselor to consult on all of your personal needs, only to identify your way of obtaining knowledge, is not realistic.

If I were to rank the modes in order of importance, realizing that the issue at hand would change this [order], generally I would start with authority. If it were a matter of right or wrong, of course the Bible would be a start. Secondly a combination of emotion and sense experience together would help to determine my personal views on the issue."

Erin Proctor (English 102-06):

"I agree with the majority of the class in that who I would turn to depends on the situation. I am very careful about what I tell to certain people. For instance, I wouldn't tell my best friend that I was in love with her boyfriend.

Some people may offer better insight into things than others. If I had a fight with my boyfriend, I'm not going to turn to a friend who has never been in a relationship or even someone that has been in "perfect" relationship with no arguing ... I want someone who has been there and understands the situation.

I guess my friends would be the people I turn to consistently though. That is probably because they tell me what they really think from a perspective the I can usually relate to. Also because I see them the most, they are there from day to day and I don't have to catch them up everytime I talk to them."

Even though most of the students felt they had trouble settling on one category, they usually worked their way down to two and a rare few students felt they could quickly identify one overarching value system.

Jeffery Hanchey (English 102-07):

"Before reading the handout on "Six Ways We Choose Values," I truly haven't ever really thought about how I choose my beliefs and values about certain things. The handout was very informative and actually made me think for a little bit. Based on the author's list, I think it would depend on what the situation is or what the issue is about. However, I tried to narrow it down to the most prominent one I would use in any given situation, and also hitched on a backup just in case the first doesn't do it for me.

First of all, I am a very self-reliant person. I usually don't depend on anyone or anything for help on anything. I think it's easier just to deal with it myself. From personal experience, I have found that most of the time asking for help or advice from someone is a total waste of time. ... I guess that would place me in category 3 [sense experience]."

Ashley Dees (English 102-06):

"Just call me Miss Emotional. When I think about my belief system, I don't really have a clue about the way I solve my problems. After reading the handout, I actually use a combination of the ways in which I achieve knowledge about what is right and wrong. Actually, it really depends on the situation with me. For example, when I am dealing with an issue of romance, I always go to a friend or my sister. But when I am faced with a moral issue, I always find a way to contact my minister or a Bible reference.

Ultimately, the task was designed as an abstract critical thinking exercise, a place for them to begin thinking about the thinking involved in the critical decisions they have faced in the past and will likely use when facing new decisions in the future. As Vygotsky points out in Thought and Language, "To study an internal process, it is necessary to externalize it experimentally, by connecting it with some outer activity; only then is objective functional analysis possible." (227) What each student did end up doing, that showed the meta element inherent in all tests that attempt to identify belief or personality, was respond in ways reflective of a particular yet general way of thinking. Going to a priest for advice would be considered an external activity that shows the internal belief in authority for guidance about a problem. Even in resisting the test, each student proved one of the basic tenets of the idea behind the test -- that each person has a recognizable belief system or personality[12]. These tests, whether crude or complex, work because the "reality" of personality and/or belief has boundaries that can be delineated. The limitation of these tests results mostly from the "fact"

[12] Another basic tenet that is corollary is the idea that being able to identify personality and belief can be a means by which one can either protect and maintain the integrity of their personality/belief or they can potentially change it to something else.

that belief and personality have shifting boundaries and semi-permeable membranes; they can expand and contract, change from within or from outside pressure, and/or change from ideas and experiences that filter through. Even the students resisting the task are marking their personality/belief in a definable way.

One of the frustrating, but exciting aspects of introductory level courses is the starting of a process that both instructors and students will not see a finish to by the end of the semester. As I tried to reinforce to the students when I asked them to perform this task, a conclusive, final answer is the least likely expectation to have when dealing with an idea as grand as one's value system. The main purpose or theory behind the practice of actually trying to narrow their value system into one category was to reveal the complexity of value systems, how they often shift with context, and how individuals and outside pressures shape them. The students had the opportunity, via the conference notebook and class discussion to see just how many different and similar value systems occupied just one class. But most importantly, the practice of thinking about one's values system as identifiable, if not reducible, helped the students see that their beliefs affect their actions, their interpretations, who they choose as friends, and their difference/similarity to others. Asking them to articulate their beliefs is an essential step in critical thinking.

Another essential aspect of the class community is personality. No matter how much abstraction and theory one throws into a situation, when people are involved, personalities are involved. Some mesh and some conflict (even when they share the same beliefs!) Like Lewis' book on values, there are a number of books with tests to determine personality. Again, these may or may not be definitive texts when it comes to determining one's personality, but that is not the point of incorporating them into an academic environment.

They are triggers. Perhaps the best known and most commonly used tes(x)t is Please Understand Me by David Keirsey and Marylin Bates. For those unfamiliar with the Keirsey/Bates Character and Temperament types, here's a very brief description of how they are determined. Keirsey/Bates use what psychologists refer to as a "forced test" to determine and delineate personality. This means that the person taking the test will be given questions that they have to answer in an either/or fashion; the choice that they make with regard to each question determines certain proclivities of personality. The questions are designed around four dyadic categories -- extroversion(E)/introversion(I), intuition(N)/sensation(S), thinking(T)/feeling(F), and judging(J)/perceiving(P). From the 70 questions in the test a person should end up with a four letter "personality;" mine was ENTP.

I reminded the students that these tests were in no way indicative of some objective truth, but another way to have them engage in that age old question that humans tend to explore in their lifetimes, "who am I?" Taking the test and sharing the information opened up further discussion for the class about the members of the class and how they thought about issues with regard to their personalities. The Briggs/Myers test is different from Lewis' test in that it claims to measure personality rather than moral character. The differences in the two are significant enough to warrant a discussion of both and the reactions of the students to both. A number of critical responses emerged in the conference notebook.

> *Erin Reedy (English 102-07):*
>
> *"I really enjoyed taking the personality test on Thursday. I think it's neat to learn more about yourself through these kinds of things. I don't think that the test should dictate what people do with their lives, in other words, don't take it as gospel, but I do think that the test was interesting and can be very helpful. For example, I asked my boyfriend to take the test this past weekend. His personality was almost the EXACT opposite of mine! I am an ENFJ and he is an ESTP."*[13]

[13] A great example of something from a course making it into the "real" world and making a "real" connection with the student and her critical thinking process.

Anna Tinga (English 102-07):

"I really enjoyed class last Thursday when we took the Keirsey Temperament Sorter. I found out a lot of things about myself and other that I really had not thought about before. Things like people being pillars of strength in the community; people always making other people happy, etc. This sort of testing is something that I am very interested in doing for a living when I graduate.

I am an ESFJ, which I am very proud to be. I'm glad that I have the kind of personality that likes to make people happy: I'm happy that way.

Amanda J. Weik (English 102-07):

"In this conference notebook [entry] I decided to write on the Personal Attitude Test we took in class on Thursday. I really enjoyed doing that activity in class. I thought it was interesting to take a test and see if everyone came out the way the test said. It was also interesting to see how different everyone is. When I found out what I was, I was so excited. I thought that when Philip read the description, that it was very 'me.' ENFJ was what I came out as. It was neat to hear the description because the [it hit the mark so accurately]. ... Anyway, I wanted to do the quiz on my roommate and my boyfriend, but I really haven't found the time to do that yet."

Transformation (How to See the Theory in the Realities):

The best transformations do not occur in the vacuum of word lists or the stagnant wastelands of exams. They thrive in environments that teem with life, contexts that are dynamic with energy drawn from the constant interaction of students and instructors, the experiences they bring into the classroom prior to its beginning, during its development and the ones they take with them when they exit. Because a transforming classroom is like a living organism, its evolution can only be generally predicted. Theories that accounts for complexity, inconsistency, human error, personality, chaos, degrees of difference, and intersubjectivity guide these classes best. It really not very difficult to see true, authentic and deep transformations, but it does take a certain degree of risk as a pedagogue to open a

classroom for such profound transformations. In large part it basically means giving up control and direction to the students sometimes and just waiting to see where a class period ends up. And yes, sometimes there are dead ends and long detours (like my first class that Wendy visited). However, when there are breakthroughs, they are usually quite intense and significant, which makes the life path of the pedagogue all the more worthwhile. I want to finish this chapter by looking at several transformations that my students from my English 105 class passed through in the Spring of 1996. These are meant, to some degree, to be generally illustrative of the meta theory and individual theories that have underwritten this entire work.

How to Pull Transformation to the Surface as a Pedagogical Axiom:

Perhaps the best way to demonstrate the organic and transformative nature of the meta theory and the particular theories that have comprised this work is to look at actual transformations described by students from the English 105 Introduction to Narrative Class taught in the Spring of 1996. Not only is/was this course the most recent class taught at the time of writing this work, but the one to best and most utilize the theories proposed herein to achieve a holistic pedagogical experience for the students and myself. I have already covered many of the various places where transformation can occur and did occur in my classes (field trips, guest speakers, the conference notebook), but the best, focused example would probably have to be the narrative assignment given to my students in English 105, Spring 1996. The assignment blends the best elements of the theories proposed -- dialectical relationships among students/students and student/instructor, awareness of audience, thinking about one's thinking, understanding the construction of and constructing narrative, empowering students, zones of proximal development, degrees of difference, etc. What I

want to concentrate on though is the final process in the assignment, the part of the work where I asked the students to assess their narrative and their feelings about what they had written for the class.

Telling a Story

The writing assignment for the course was straightforward; I wanted the students to write a narrative, to tell a story. The basic parameters of the assignment were to make the first draft a minimum of five pages typed and to be a piece of writing that they cared about and wanted to write. They could try their hand at science fiction, biography, horror, autobiography, non-fiction, a blend of fiction/non-fiction, pretty much anything they wanted. One student was sharp enough to ask me if a lab report would count. If it told a story and it interested them to write it, why not? A good boundary question. For a couple of class periods the students and I marked the boundaries of the assignment. One of the key markers involved grammar (as it always seems to). My attitude about grammar is rather caviler, I suspect. I don't want the students worrying over it much in their first draft because it tends to hamstring their writing. If they have ever tried to write complex sentences and had a penalty every time they did, it's most likely that they will not try them again. So here's how I approached the issue with the students. I told them that their narrative would be read by me and at least one other student by the time the final draft is due. When they got to the stage of sharing their paper with another, I encouraged them to produce the cleanest, best looking piece of work ... something they would be proud to pass around. I found that when the students value their work, they tend to be much more conscientious about producing high quality work. Also, I've found that grammar hammering just doesn't work. After twelve years of it in grade school ... if the tactic of beating it into a student did not work then, I don't

expect to be the miracle worker that will get it into them by college. The writing has to be important to the student to get him/her to work on his/her grammar.

I told the students that I would mark their grammatical errors and they could look them up and straighten them out on their own. If they needed help locating a source or understanding their error, they could speak to me or a writing center attendant. The only time I make a point of "counting" grammar is when a student clearly has a patterned problem (over or under use of commas) or the grammatical problem interferes with the reader's ability to understand what is written. Students are often timid about writing and need to feel as comfortable about forays into that arena as possible. The first question out of their mouths is usually whether grammar will count. They ask that question knowing full well that the answer will determine the way in which they choose to write their paper. They will end up spending too much time fretting over individual sentences and not advancing their story, so I tell them to write the story first, then we, me as a helping friend, will clean up any problems in the text. I can usually feel the collective sigh of relief that comes after this discussion. I always remember my chess metaphor when I think about grammar and student writing: students are not professional writers and I do not grade them as such. They need room to make errors without harsh penalty, just like a novice learning to play chess.

So, the first step was under way. The entire assignment would involve three stages. After the students wrote their papers, I would read them and give them comments on their papers for them to work on. There were several aspects of the assignment that I presented to the students in order to help them feel comfortable writing and taking risks. The first draft would not be given a grade: how could it if I did not have any prescribed criteria. The only way to receive an assessment that could be a grade would be for a student to fail to meet the

five page minimum. If that occurred, the paper was marked late and returned to the student to get the desired five pages. Otherwise I could not begin to assess the paper until I read the narrative of the student. I also told the students that it was quite likely that many of them would finish the course before their narrative was complete. I mentioned this because I did not want them to try to write a self-enclosed five page narrative when five pages might only be the introduction. I discovered that many of the students went well beyond the five page limit ... and by the time the second draft was due (which had to have a minimum of ten pages) many students had written works of fifteen to twenty pages.

Another crucial aspect of the assignment was to inform the students that their work would not be compared with each other's. Borrowing again from Vygotsky, I have learned and experienced the situation in which students of varying degrees of writing experience and skill are present in the classroom. And since I do not have a prescribed standard as to what constitutes good writing for all the students who pass through my class, I have to assess each individual student paper and each student's work. As I explained to the class, all of the students would need to work in different ways on each of their narratives. I anticipated that some students would need work on developing the internal aspect of their story, some might need to take more risks with the story, some would need to expand the story at the end, and on and on. For this reason, they only needed to be concerned with the dialogue between each one of them and myself.

As I read each paper, my comments reflected back against the narrative I was reading. I wanted the students to have the experience of an active audience, one that thought about and made suggestions about their writing. Since I was not grading the first draft, I did not have to construct in my own mind what the A paper was supposed to look like before it

reached the final stages. I simply read each narrative and noted to the student what ideas I thought might be helpful as they began work on their second draft. I was careful to inform them that they were allowed to ignore my suggestions and rework the papers in any way they wanted or they could continue their narratives. No matter how many pages the students had written, I expected five new pages by the second draft. Most of the students found my responses helpful catalysts for continuing their papers. In the majority of the papers my suggestions involved expanding and detailing parts of the story that they had possibly underdeveloped. Regardless of my comments, the students still had to produce five new pages of text, and I wanted to see what they would create without my demanding they respond directly to my thoughts about their narrative. The next stage in the process of writing the paper was the second draft. Again, no grade was assigned, so long as they completed the work amount they did not need to worry about a grade. At the minimum I was expecting ten pages of text by the second draft. I also informed them that the second draft would also go to one of their group members and one member of the class outside their small group.

By the time the narratives reached this stage, I had some thoughtful, funny stories. I could see that allowing the students to write within their own zones of comfort in the first draft and challenging them along the boarders towards the next zone paid off in second drafts of considerable difference in terms of improvement and thought. Papers ranged from fictional stories (a couple of papers that would fit into the fantasy genre) to enhanced stories (ones that were based in real life experiences, but with fictional additions to boost the drama or humor of the story) and some very intense personal narratives (dealing with the death of a loved one, the choice of an abortion, an alcoholic parent, and the difficult transition into

college). The idea behind the narrative assignment was to allow each student to find his/her own voice and style. The primary goal of the course was to get the student's involved and invested in their writing. To set up such a moment for students to pass through and into about their writing, a certain degree of freedom and trust must be given to the students. Specific topics cannot be assigned under these conditions; the instructor must trust that the student can find his/her way into a topic or subject that will help them sustain their writing without using a grade as a whip. Perhaps two of my best papers came from students who had to overcome two of the most common struggles in a learning situation where they were granted "real" freedom for the first time. One of them, Katie Pierson, had to overcome distrust; clearly, she had been promised freedom to choose a topic only to feel betrayed when the topic did not meet a hidden standard or agenda of the teacher. The other, Darren Huggins, had to struggle with the very idea of freedom in starting his narrative; for him the assignment felt too chaotic. But both of them eventually mastered their own hesitations and produced fantastic papers.

Katie's paper reflected her disillusionment with college in general and she conveyed her feelings with a wonderful, matter-of-fact voice that leaps right out of the first paragraph of her paper:

> Everyone says it's supposed to be the best time of your life. They say you meet tons of new, fun people. They say there are no better years than your college years. But so far, everyone's been wrong. If anything college has been the worst time of my life. My life changed when I went to college as, I'm sure, everyone's does. But mine changed for the worse. Things were wrong and chaotic and I was at a loss for how to make it right again.

What made Katie's paper such a powerful piece to read was her honesty. She willingly puts herself into the paper and through her own experience relates some rather insightful judgments about college and herself:

> I had very few regrets before I got to college, but now there are so many. First, and most obvious, I lost my will. By the time I got to college I was so tired of school. I couldn't handle spitting out memorized books anymore, and when I realized that college was more of the same, I refused to study for anything. I couldn't study for anything because I knew it would drive me insane. So I just didn't do it. I quit when it came to school. I still took tests and some days I even read a little, but only because college is something I know I *must* finish. Somehow along with studying and homework went exercising and giving a damn. No longer were there days where two or more hours were spent at the gym or in the pool. I gained weight; one of the things that I swore I would never, ever let happen. I quit swimming; something I knew would never happen. I felt like I was being held back by something invisible and it wouldn't let go or even loosen it's grip a little.

At the end of the paper she relates an intense sense of irony about the "college experience" that nicely closes her initial thoughts about how "everyone" had promised that it would be the best time of her life:

> I feel like college sucked everything good out of my life [in the middle section of the paper she talks about the loss of her best friend Paige and almost losing her boyfriend Freddie] and I don't know why. Yes, I got a lot of things I lost back [Paige's friendship for one; Paige was in my class with Katie], but they came back with bad memories attached. I was supposed to learn so much about myself. I was supposed to grow and be a better person. What happened to all of that? If you ask me to tell you about a good time my first year in college, I can't do it. That's why I felt it best to distance myself from the "college experience." I moved off campus and [now] view UNCG as only the school I go to, not the "experience" I'm supposed to be having. I'd rather experience something that makes me happy.

My "college experience" as an undergraduate had been the best years of my life. Actually, my college experience continues to be the best years of my life, so Katie's paper really struck

a chord with me, probably because her experience of something I understood so well turned out to be so very different. Katie's paper was something of a gauntlet thrown down in response to the gauntlet I had thrown down about freedom to write. I don't think Katie would find it unfair of me to describe her as a bit cynical about my teaching approach from the beginning of class until the first draft of her paper. For the cynical student, my intention to allow freedom of choice about topic and in developing one's writing style *is* thrown out as a gauntlet. Clearly her experience with college had reinforced the idea that college was a lot of B/S, high school to the next power. I had all the earmarks of a "liberal" teacher waiting for a chance to pounce on unsuspecting undergraduates. For whatever reason, she decided to "call my bluff," which, of course, turned out not to be a bluff at all. Once she realized it was okay to criticize college in her own words, she invested even more of herself into the second draft of the paper, expanding personal revelations about herself, her friendship with Paige and her relationship with Freddie in context of her college experience. She also taught me, once again, that students, especially the ones who were promised freedom and openness at one time only to have their honesty unexpectedly reigned in by instructors not really ready to deal with some of the chaos that comes from both of those ideals, tend to want to really push the boundaries to see if I will falter in my promises. It was okay, in my mind, for Katie to say that college was a "load of crap" for her; I just encouraged her to do it a thoughtful narrative manner. Welcome to authentic, invested writing by a young person in the modern era.

Darren's challenge in his paper was far different than Katie's. He had to struggle with the problem of too much freedom. In fact, his first draft and his second draft had nothing to do with each other, content wise. The first draft merely functioned as a jump start

to his writing process, but the second draft was an entirely new and different paper. Darren was one of many students who meet up with a writer's block when given freedom to create their own paper. The best idea for working through this is to suggest that the student write about the block, to literally write, "I have no idea what I want to write about in this paper. I'm just staring at a this paper wondering what I'm going to say ..." Usually out of that chaos (as Berthoff argues) there will eventually come an order. For Darren that order came in the form of talking about his personal life in the public forum of the paper. He discussed with me the idea of writing about his personal life, which, he admitted could seem a bit extreme to the class audience. Even so, it was clear that his writing investment hinged on being able to write his personal narrative. I suggested he use the negotiation of audience and personal story as a way to focus the paper, to control it if you will. The often difficult aspect of writing about personal experience, especially if the writer him/herself considers the material potentially disturbing or unnerving to an audience, is finding a way to maintain the integrity of the private while sharing it with the public. I think Darren successfully managed both by his second draft. His opening paragraph launches the reader directly into Darren's mind:

> "Oh, Christ!" So this is what going to a shrink can get you? I pay him $100.00 an hour and he sends me home to write about my life in order to help me find the answer to my problems. I think I could have done this by myself for free. Do I seem a bit bitter? Maybe I am ... I guess you could say that is part of my "problem" as it has come to be know amongst the family and close friends. You see, I'm normally a very happy person. I am always the person who entertains everyone else, sort of keeping the rest of them happy, I guess you could say. Not that I mind, though. It does keep you at the top of every "A" list in town. Us entertainers are always a big hit at cocktail and dinner parties. No one would ever guess that I have a very fiery temper which results in the destruction of several personal items per week. Some of them pretty valuable items. ...

His story continues through a series of personal anecdotes involving his mother, father, his business, and his return to college. But it is clear that the paper reaches its central focus when he begins discussing his view of relationships:

> When it comes to relationships, what can I say? They have all be short-lived. Most have been rocky. Some have been scandalous. One ended in tragedy. I guess you could say that I don't exactly have the best track record. I have often wondered why I can't sustain a relationship past six or eight months. I think that part of the problem just comes with the territory. Relationships between men never seem to last. If a gay couple makes it to one month, then some other gay man is likely to throw a party for them. Generally speaking, most gay men are always looking for something better in every aspect of their lives. Better clothes, better cars, better houses (with only the best interiors), better drugs. This quest for the best tends to carry over into better lovers, as well. I don't mean in a physical way, though. I mean a better person as a lover. I think that if a person is always striving for something better, they are likely to always be unhappy because they are not willing to settle. When I was younger, I was very guilty of this. If I was dating a guy and he wore something that I thought was inappropriate, I would break up with him. If he said the wrong thing in front of my friends and embarrassed me, I would do the same thing. I know that sounds very petty, but I am very high strung and little annoyances like that seem to disrupt my balance. Rather than deal with that I would prefer to sever the relationship.

Like Katie, Darren writes with intense honesty about his feelings and experiences. The next couple of paragraphs deal with his best relationship to date and the tragedy that robbed him of his future partner, Matt. Darren succinctly tells the event, "As Matt was riding his bike through the hills of his neighborhood, he had been struck by a truck whose driver had been smoking crack. I was completely devastated. How could this have happened? Things were finally perfect for me and suddenly it was over." By the end of the narrative he realizes just how invested he has become in the writing process and how that investment "took over" the writing:

> I suppose I got a little long winded with that sequence [about relationships], but once I started, I just let my feelings go. Maybe I have a lot more to be thankful for than I usually think about. Perhaps I should try to

> think of the great times we [Matt and Darren] had together as a way of suppressing my frequent anger outbursts. I just get so involved in the semantics of my life that I never think about the important things. I guess this little soul searching assignment has been more therapeutic than I thought it would ever be. Was is supposed to make me cry, though?

If teachers of writing, narrative, and literature open themselves up to both authentic learning and Vygotsky's zones of proximal development, then I think it becomes apparent that for writing or thinking to become an academic value for students they have to first see that academia values their perspective and honesty. Too often it is easy to forget, in the teaching of writing and literature in a prescribed educational environment, that writing and reading best occur when a person experiences them as connections with others in a felt way. Both Darren and Katie could have probably written adequate essays on the Civil War or some such topic, but I doubt they would have been so forthright and honest, or so invested in the writing.

The narratives, themselves, were only part of the assignment or of the transformation I was hoping to teach the students with regard to narrative. The other primary part was to come with the final aspect of the assignment and the aspect I want to detail out as the conclusion of this chapter. Rather than have the students move onto a third draft, I asked the students to write an assessment of their work on their narrative, specifically thinking about how they got it started, what they thought about it, and the changes they choose to make from draft one to draft two. I also asked them to reflect on my role as a reader who had "professional academic" input into their paper and how they decided to respond to that aspect of the assignment. I was even hopeful that some students would choose to reject or ignore some of my comments, but still be able to explain why they choose to do so (things like, "your comments didn't take the story in the direction I wanted to go, so instead ... ").

Transformation Through Narrative:

Each student chose to reflect on his/her narrative in different ways, but each did so with a great degree of awareness; the following excerpts reflect both the specific thoughts of the individual students and the general transformation achieved through the writing process. Like Darren and Katie, each of the following students created a narrative unique to their interpretation of the assignment. Sari did not have to write a personal narrative, but he chose to take up that challenge in his own writing. He used a diary style format, breaking down feelings and events in to small dated sections, to relate his story. Patricia decided on a creative writing technique for telling her family story, using her house to tell the narrative of key events in her family history. Kay, like Darren, used her paper as an opportunity to gain control of a difficult personal issue, her father's alcoholism and abuse. She was another student who found the negotiation of public and private a useful therapeutic exercise. And finally, Monica tackled the controversial issue of abortion with a personal/fictional narrative written to encase her audience in the moral dilemmas bound up in the abortion issue. Each students' inroad or creative start with his/her narrative displayed his/her own unique personality and what s/he hope to accomplish through the narrative experience:

> *Starting this narrative was probably the most difficult part of this paper for me. I am very unaccustomed to write about myself, or even include myself in a story, that would be read publicly. The reason as to why this is the case, I'm not quite sure of, but such is life. I found that while I wrote this paper, I had to urge myself not to leave out significant details ... I tried very hard to scribe very accurately my exact feelings at the times described. I picked a number of incidents in my life that have remained very clear in my mind, with very clear messages and an effect that would jump out at the reader.*
>
> *Sari Abdalla*

> *After a great deal of brain-storming, I finally got the idea to write a narrative about my house in New York, using the house as the narrator. I chose this idea because I needed a way to deal with my feelings about the 'big move.' Once we moved, I was in Greensboro starting school, finding a job, and returning to a boyfriend. So, in a way I was looking forward to a*

new start here. It was in November that I began to feel home-sick. When I thought about it, I never gave myself time to think about the effects of the move in August. Creating this story gave me a chance to rekindle old memories and appreciate all that I had. Now I feel as if I can move on and know that what I had was great, but Greensboro is my home now and I should make the best of it.

Patricia Espinosa

I am fairly happy with my narrative. I put a lot of emotion into my writing it and I am finally to the point where it doesn't bring tears to my eyes when I read it [her story was about her alcoholic/abusive father and how she worked through the abuse]. *The story is finished in the respect that it tells of one episode. However, it is an ongoing story that I work through in my everyday life. But not quite as much before.*

Kay Mowery

I was very pleased with my narrative paper. I believe that I even shocked myself with how much I wrote and how well I think I put it together. In the past, when writing narratives, I never could think of that much to write. The material that I did write seemed dull and boring to me. This paper was the first narrative that I ever wrote that I actually did not mind someone else reading. Once I began to write it seemed as if the rest of the story just "flowed." Perhaps the reason for this is that my narrative paper was written on a topic that I have very strong feelings about and that has some relevance to my personal life and feelings [her central topics were abortion and false relationships]. *I also felt like I was being pressed for time with papers of the past. It was much easier for me to write this narrative because I was not pressed for time.*[14]

Monica Webb

Each of the students found a way to interpret and take possession of the writing assignment in a way that allowed them to find a way to make the work for the course interesting. Once they hit upon the "appropriate" approach, they were able to make significant leaps in their storytelling and writing. It also made my engagement in the overall task far more interactive. Since I had made it clear that my role was to suggest rather than determine ... afterall, they were writing the stories and not me ... I think they were better prepared to think about how

[14] There were deadlines, but not for a final, complete story. Monica's paper was one of many that finished in the middle, but what she produced up to her *stopping* point was quite powerful

they constructed their narrative and how they could change or manipulate the story to better hit a target audience. My professional pedagogical role was to help them see the places in their narratives where there might be gaps that they needed to fill in. But I also wanted them to see that writing is a process they could approach in many ways. Some student wanted to get the entire story out before they started to work on the internal aspects, others were much more comfortable slowly, carefully developing each segment of the story. Here are some student reflections about my participation in their writing process.

> *Once I wrote the second draft I was much more pleased. The result was I had a much more coherent and easy to follow paper. Despite this I never reached the final stage of my narrative. I concentrated the most of the things I needed to improve in my paper rather than writing the ending.*
>
> *The comments you made were very helpful. When I wrote this paper, I had all of the background information* [the paper was about a car accident involving her friends] *so the paper seemed clear to me. However, when someone else reads my paper they may have questions due to the lack of information they have about the subject. By your questions and comments I was able to see where the paper may be unclear to the reader.*
>
> *Becky Armbruster*

> *You didn't just tell me what to do or explain why what you thought was the best, you complimented my work and then "challenged" me to expand on my current thoughts. This was the best thing about all your comments. You gave a "close end" suggestion, but left me with a very open ended thought. You "challenged" me to write even further and probe even deeper and this really made me think about my story and my grammar (ha, ha). My responses to your various comments led me to be quite a very active audience. I reacted to your comments and thought and wrote, which helped the process along very rapidly.*
>
> *Amanda Teague*

> *I changed a lot of things in my second draft. The part that I was most pleased with was the part about the fight that broke out in the classroom* [the paper was about this student's exaggerated bad day; he fictionalized one of our many debates into a slapstick fight]. *You told me to blow this part of the paper out of the water and just go crazy with it. I had to think a little while on this section. It started out as just an argument between Adam and Sari, but in the second draft it turned into a wrestling match involving the entire class. Another part that I changed that wasn't prompted by you was the section about the girl who used to be a guy. I was watching a program*

on TV that had "drag queens" on it and thought it was funny, so I figured out a way to work it into my paper. It really fit well with what I was doing.
Matt Bullard

When I received my first draft back I read all of Philip's comments and suggestions. I admire the way he began by complementing my paper then listing his suggestions. I agree with his comments, like the fact that I could have explored more of the depths that were inherent in the narrative itself. Then he followed up his suggestions with examples, which I thought very helpful. It made me feel like he wasn't just making suggestions because he could. It was more like he was genuinely concerned with helping me write a good narrative.
Kimberly Davis

I don't know how to tell a story unless it is funny. That is just my personality and always has been. I love to make people laugh. ... Anyway, I guess I could have taken your advice and tried to make the story scary, but that would have taken forever!!! ... So I guess I didn't really [respond to your comments] in an "active way." I just didn't want to go that way, sorry. But I hope you liked the way it turned out, I did. Plus it really shows my personality in the paper and who I am, not some made up story [for the teacher's benefit].
Erica Hays

All of the students expressed some degree of transformation by writing their narrative, whether they surprised themselves with their own perception that their writing was good (Amanda, Erica, Chad, Monica) or whether they used the narrative to work through problems (Kay, Sari, and Katie). What excited me most about the work the students did for the class was how much of themselves they invested in the work. And when asked in the "right way," I was further impressed with how critical and thoughtful they could be regarding their own work ... but I have always suspected and believed as much.

Parting Thoughts:

A pedagogue's "prime directive," no matter his or her field of study, should be to assess the transformations his/her students achieved in the class. The transformations can be of various sorts and types, including ones that have to do with the material and focus of the

course and ones that do not. What education needs most is to have its instructors authentically concerned that students gain something "real" from any course that they are teaching. Disseminating information without a concern for whether or not the information is valuable in the students "actual" lives is pedagogy without substance, the shadow of "true" pedagogy.

In all the discussion about how to connect with students one underlying premise has not been directly addressed -- that this approach to teaching is not just satisfying for the student, but also for the instructor. Authentic conversation creates one common reaction to the teaching; the students listen. Teaching is more enriching when the instructor can actually see and assess that an authentic interaction is occurring between him/herself and the student. That is the best moment in teaching because the learning process is having a chance to occur. Teaching students who do not come to the class invested in the material is one of the most challenging areas of teaching; that the most inexperienced teachers are usually asked to perform this task often doubles the challenge and can decrease the chance for success. This work tries to fill in that pedagogical space. This text intended to show new instructors or instructors that are thinking about teaching with a "newness" of mind that the action and theory of pedagogy is as much a reaction to their individual personalities and abilities as it is guided by scholarship and precedence. This process is alive. If I have helped you with even one new idea that will give you a greater sense of what you want to accomplish and how you want to accomplish it as a pedagogue, then this work has made contact.

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